



**REVIEW OF THE DAC PRINCIPLES
FOR EVALUATION
OF DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE**

FOREWORD

In 1998, Members of the Working Party on Aid Evaluation completed a review of their experience with the application of the DAC “Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance”, which were adopted in 1991 by the DAC High Level Meeting. The objective of the review was to examine the implementation and use of the Principles, in order to assess their impact, usefulness and relevance and to make recommendations.

This review was organised in two phases. The first phase consisted of a questionnaire to Members responsible for central evaluation units, which aimed to examine the state of implementation and use of the Principles to appraise the degree of “compliance or non-compliance and to assess their impact, usefulness and relevance. The second phase involved a in-depth review of experience based on direct interviews with evaluators and the users of evaluations, which aimed to obtain a better understanding of the use of evaluations produced by the central evaluation offices.

This report brings together the findings of both the first and the second phases of the review. The first Chapter of the report contains the main conclusions and recommendations.

The review demonstrated that evaluation in development co-operation is evolving and changing focus. Most Members have re-organised their central evaluation offices to provide them with a new role, and a new and strong focus on aid effectiveness. Moreover, central evaluation offices have been moving away from traditional project evaluation to programme, sector, thematic and country assistance evaluations. Several Members reported a growing interest in decentralised evaluations and indicated that evaluation in developing countries is beginning to take root.

Most Members reported to have reached a good degree of compliance with the essential DAC “Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance”, and indicated that they have found them useful and relevant in guiding their work and, in some cases, in re-organising their evaluation offices. Based on these results, Members concluded that the Principles are still valid and sound.

Nevertheless, it was recognised that the Principles needed to be complemented and reinforced with guidance (e.g. good or best practices) in key areas. These include ways to: effectively handle the trade-off between independence and involvement required to gain partnership; improve feedback and communication practices; promote an evaluation culture; implement country programme and joint evaluations; promote partnerships in evaluations; design and implement performance measurement systems; and evaluate humanitarian aid.

This review would not have been possible without the active interest of Members of the Working Party on Aid Evaluation and the participating development agencies who have contributed with their time and resources to the review of the DAC “Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance”. Special thanks go to Mr. W. H. North who ably assisted the Secretariat in co-ordinating and analysing responses, and summarising the results.

This work is published on the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD.

Mr. Niels DABELSTEIN
Chair of the Working Party on Aid Evaluation

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	2
Chapter 1. REVIEW OF THE DAC PRINCIPLES FOR EVALUATION OF DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	5
Introduction	5
The changing context for evaluation	6
Comparison of the views of evaluators and the users of evaluation	7
Compliance with the Principles	8
Concluding observations	11
Usefulness of the Principles	12
Recommendations	12
Applying the findings of Phases I and II	12
Specifying best practices	12
Evaluation and new assistance instruments	14
Chapter 2. PHASE I: SYNTHESIS REPORT.....	17
Executive summary	17
Introduction	19
Profile of Members' evaluations, assessment overviews and recommendations	20
Chapter 3. PHASE II: SYNTHESIS REPORT	35
Introduction	35
Knowledge of evaluation work of central evaluation offices	36
Impact of evaluations.....	37
Awareness and understanding of the DAC Principles for Evaluation	38
Assessment of experience with decentralised evaluations	38
The views of the recipient countries	38
Summary overview	38
Appendix 1. PHASE I: RESULTS FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE	40
Introduction	40
Purpose of evaluation	40
Impartiality and Independence	42
Credibility	46
Usefulness.....	50
Participation of donors and recipients	53
Donor co-operation.....	54
Evaluation programming	56
Design and implementation of evaluations	57
Reporting, dissemination and feedback.....	59

Decentralised evaluation systems	60
Application of these Principles and follow-up	61
Appendix 2. PHASE II: RESULTS FROM THE SURVEY	63
Introduction	63
Users' knowledge of the evaluation work of central evaluation offices	65
The quality of evaluation products including questions of impartiality and credibility	67
The relevance and usefulness of the products of evaluation	69
The impact of evaluations and their recommendations and lessons on improving the quality of agency programmes	71
Awareness and understanding of the DAC.....	72
Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance	72
Assessment of experience with decentralised evaluation work	73
Recipient country views	74
Summary view of evaluation work in the agency	76
Appendix 3. THE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PHASE I.....	83
Appendix 4. THE SURVEY GUIDE FOR PHASE II.....	106
Appendix 5. THE DAC PRINCIPLES FOR EVALUATION OF DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE	113

Chapter 1.

REVIEW OF THE DAC PRINCIPLES FOR EVALUATION OF DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

In December 1995, Members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Working Party on Aid Evaluation initiated a review of their experience with the application of the DAC “Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance”, which were endorsed by the DAC High Level Meeting in December 1991. The scope of the review was to: “generate information that would provide a clear picture of recent evolution in policies and organisational structures, and major challenges facing the evaluation functions of DAC Members and Observers”. The objectives were to:

- examine the implementation and use of the Principles by DAC Members and Observers;
- assess the impact, usefulness and relevance of the Principles in light of the evolution of the evaluation function;
- make recommendations on changes, where needed, to the Principles and to agencies.

The review was conducted in two phases, the first completed in late 1996 and the second in 1998.

- Phase I examined the implementation and use of the Principles to appraise the degree of “compliance or non-compliance”, and to assess their impact, usefulness and relevance. The review was based on a questionnaire addressed to those responsible for central evaluation units. Sixteen bilateral Members and six multilateral observers responded to the questionnaire (see Annex 1 for details.)
- Phase II reviewed experience of the users of evaluations and was based on a survey of users including recipient countries. It also provided an opportunity for observations on decentralised evaluations. Fifteen bilateral Members and five multilateral observers participated in this phase (see Annex 1 for details).

Scope of the report

This report illustrates the findings of the reviews undertaken in Phase I and II and provides the conclusions and recommendations. For the most part, it is concerned with the work of central evaluation offices. It is based on the analysis of responses from Phases I and II surveys and on the following relevant documents:

- The conclusions and recommendations report (see Chapter 1).
- A synthesis report of the Review of the DAC “Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance”, Phase I (see Chapter 2).
- The synthesis of the surveys of users of evaluation (see Chapter 3).
- Supporting summary analysis and a section-by-section synthesis of Members’ responses, Phase I (see Appendix 1).
- Supporting summary analysis of the surveys of users of evaluation (see Appendix 2).
- The questionnaire for Phase I (see Appendix 3).
- The survey of users of evaluation — the survey guide (see Appendix 4).
- The statement of the DAC “Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance”, 1991 (see Appendix 5).

This first Chapter aims to provide the reader with a synthetic overview of the main findings of the review of the DAC Principles, while more detailed information are contained in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 and the related Appendixes. It focuses on:

- the changing context of evaluation work;
- a comparison of views of evaluators and the users of evaluation;
- Members’ assessment of the state of evaluation operations with respect to compliance with the Principles; and
- conclusions and recommendations.

The changing context for evaluation

The DAC statement was adopted in 1991. Since then, the fundamental principles of evaluation work have not changed, but their interpretation and application have had to be adapted to agencies’ evolving programme and organisational interests. While Members’ circumstances vary, there are some common themes.

First, *the organisation of central evaluation work has been evolving*. For some, it has been completed, while for others it is still emerging. For some of the bilateral donors, a key feature of this change is the integration of development assistance programmes and operations into foreign policy establishments. While the relationship between development assistance and foreign policy has always been close, many development assistance agencies were independent organisations having their high-level political leadership separate from those of the foreign policy agencies. For some evaluation offices, this shift has resulted in a downgrading of the role of central evaluation, although there are some indications that this negative trend is being reversed. For others, the consolidation of aid agencies has provided a new and broader role for evaluation. While the reasons for this shift may vary among Member countries, an underlying factor appears to be the growing centrality to foreign policy interest in global development issues, such as the global environment, poverty, trade,

transformations in newly independent states, ethnic and regional crises -- largely man-made -- and related emergency and rehabilitation assistance.

Second, *the focus of evaluations for central evaluation offices has been moving away from traditional cycles of project monitoring and evaluation.* This shift is more marked for some Members than for others. Generally, evaluators are taking on evaluations of the broader perspectives of sectors, themes, and country programmes, often involving a number of recipient countries. In the reorientation of development assistance work, more attention is being given to: the overarching objectives of poverty reduction, governance issues (elections, role of civil societies, human rights, corruption), the cross-cutting themes of gender equity, the environment, major collaborative evaluations of international emergencies and multi-donor programmes and agencies, the expanded roles of NGOs, internal management and operating systems, and new instruments of assistance such as sector support (investment, expenditure) programmes.

Third, associated with the previous point, *there are changes in domestic interests in development assistance in Member countries.* For some, more real evidence of the effectiveness of assistance programmes is sought, while for others this situation is part of a long history of the ebb and flow of domestic support, as reflected in the views and actions of legislative bodies. However, with this change there has been an increased interest in the results and impact of development assistance and in the means for measuring and reporting these results such as rating systems of success.

Fourth, *several members have pointed to the growing interest in decentralised evaluations, primarily, but not exclusively, focused on projects.* Operations units and implementation agencies are assuming this function with little or no participation from central evaluation offices. For some agencies this has been the practice for many years but, for others, it represents a shift and growth of evaluation activity that deserves greater attention.

Finally, *evaluation in developing countries is becoming established.* However, competent central evaluation units need to be set up within the national governments of many of the poorer developing countries, and support for these units is becoming high priority in international development activity. As the process of democratisation evolves in these countries, with demand for greater participation by civil societies in decision-making on development policy, the role of evaluation will become more important; it can be a valued source for transparency and accountability that democratic societies call for. This evolution may require a reorientation in the work of central evaluation units to involve the recipient countries more fully as partners in donor evaluations; support the development of independent evaluation processes in the recipient countries; and encourage their leadership in the monitoring and evaluation of national programmes assisted by several donors.

Without necessarily calling for a restatement of the Principles of evaluation, this changing context points to the desirability of rethinking about how they should be interpreted and applied.

Comparison of the views of evaluators and the users of evaluation

Concerning the Principles, both evaluators and users of evaluations tended to draw similar conclusions on evaluation offices' performance, and they respect the principles of independence, impartiality and credibility, and endorse the importance, in principle, of having independent central evaluation functions in their agencies. However, the ability of evaluators to contribute to decision-making can be frustrated when senior managers and policy staff wish to limit the independence of the

central evaluation function to avoid assessments that impinge on their policy agendas, performance judgements, or public relations interests. This perspective relates primarily to thematic and sector evaluations, but can also be relevant to project evaluations at the operating and technical levels. Evaluation offices are not free from the inclinations of their senior managers, operations and technical staff -- the users -- to resist, attack, or side-track evaluations which particularly affect their areas of responsibility.

The point has also been made -- and recognised in the Principles -- by both evaluators and users of evaluations that a trade-off may be necessary between independence and the involvement required to gain ownership of findings and recommendations. How is this trade-off handled while maintaining the integrity and credibility of the evaluation process? This question deserves further examination.

Finally, there are several points of concern to the users which may not be fully appreciated by evaluation offices:

- The users are sensitive about their role in annual programming for evaluations and the transparency of the process for selecting projects and topics to be evaluated.
- They emphasise the need for greater clarity on the purpose(s) of evaluations, starting with annual programming and on through Terms of Reference and the preparation of reports.
- They are concerned that the selection of evaluators is not being open to a wider circle of expertise to provide fresh insights and minimise the effects of close client relationships.
- While they recognise the generally high quality of the evaluations, they have the familiar criticisms about voluminous reports, no time to read them, questions about relevancy to their work, and ease of access to useful lessons.
- They stress the importance of relating substance and form of the reports to different audiences inside and outside their agencies.

Compliance with the Principles

The distinctions between the four broad categories of compliance cited in the first phase synthesis report¹ appear less clear cut after the second phase, mainly because most central evaluation operations have been affected by organisational changes and some of those that at first were deteriorating, have been restored. Thus, there are three main groups. Out of 29 countries and international organisations participating in the DAC Evaluation Group on Aid Evaluation:

- a) sixteen (of which six are international organisations) have established central evaluation operations and are broadly in compliance with the DAC Principles. However, most of them have gone through, or are currently experiencing, reforms (some major, some less so) as part of their agencies' reorganisation or, as described by some, as re-engineering. These reforms include integration in foreign policy establishments, changes in development priorities, and/or some rethinking of the evaluation function in relation to

¹. See Chapter 2.

user interests. The expectation for this group is to refocus and enhance evaluation capacities;

- b) eight have deteriorated in their compliance, or have limited capacities for complying, owing to organisational shifts and lack of management support and resources for evaluation work; yet in spite of this, they appear to be regaining their acceptance;
- c) five have little or no structured evaluation systems and capacities or are just beginning to develop them.

These categories are broad groupings. Variations principle-by-principle among Members are evident within the groupings and there is some latitude for interpretations of what constitutes compliance. Also situations are changing; thus, the number in each category will shift over time. As the structure and conduct of evaluations of development assistance are regularly affected by changes in organisational relationships, high level leadership, resources, and development circumstances, the application of the Principles requires constant attention. As pointed out in the report for Phase I, “the term compliance seems prescriptive and regulatory. The nature of the Principles does not lend itself to a strict interpretation of compliance ...”. Greater precision in the requirements with fuller elaboration on trade-offs and applications would permit a more categorical assessment. A better appreciation of compliance may be found by looking at experience with some of the main Principles. The review points to the following conclusions, recognising that the degree of compliance is not always clear from members’ reports.

Independence, impartiality and credibility

Strict compliance with *the principle of organisational independence* requires that the central evaluation unit report to a governing board, or other programme oversight body, not involved in operations. A variation may be a high-level policy official such as a Minister who has a broader mandate than the operations of the development assistance programme but who is also responsible to an oversight council or legislative committee with responsibility for evaluations. This organisational structure is evident in some of the multilateral development agencies and a few bilateral ones. It is important for maintaining the independence of the evaluation unit. Also, the principal evaluator should have a fixed-term contract, with special employment status and, preferably, have no re-employment opportunity. Budget resources for evaluations and qualified professional staff should generally be commensurate with the scale of responsibility. In these situations, both the substance and image of independence are clear.

For bilateral donors generally, the *interpretation of independence* needs to be adjusted to the specific situations. While none report to line operations managers, the Principle specified that the evaluation process should be independent and impartial “with respect to policy-making and the delivery and management of development assistance”. In several situations, the chief evaluator reports to a policy bureau or management committee, or the principal administrator, without links to a higher oversight body or legislative committee, although even oversight bodies can be fractious and non supportive. This oversight function is important for ensuring management’s continuing acceptance of the independence of the evaluation function, and counter tendencies of senior managers to downgrade this function or modify the work and leadership to its liking. Also, the employment status of the chief evaluator is less secure and little different from that of regular agency staff. Yet, in

some instances, as pointed out above, the independence of central evaluation is well respected despite its place in the organisation.

The Principle of independence can be overplayed. As the users of evaluations have pointed out, too much independence, in practice, can be self-defeating with the result that recommendations and lessons of evaluation are not taken seriously. The Principle of independence has to be balanced with the interest in promoting ownership of the evaluation products and their recommendations. At the same time, if accountability, and not lessons, is the primary purpose of an evaluation, then the independence function is critical. It appears that the well-established central evaluation offices are sensitive to this issue. It becomes more critical with the evolution of evaluation work into thematic country programme, and cross-cutting policy and strategy issues, which impinge more directly on foreign policy interests. Balancing impartiality and independence with the importance of promoting ownership is an art that cannot be prescribed, but some examples of best practices may be helpful.

The question of independence is also closely tied to the competence and integrity of the chief evaluation officers and their staff. Here it is a question of adequate resources and capable professional staff who are able to maintain their impartiality, which is a potential problem when career opportunities are tied to agency employment outside the evaluation office. Independence is less likely to be an issue if the organisation culture is one that values institutional learning and, thus, the contributions of evaluations to this learning.

Issues of compliance with *the Principles of independence and impartiality* and, in turn, *credibility* are evident in review processes and the resolution of differences that arise from evaluation findings and recommendations. As both the evaluators and users of evaluation suggest, there are tendencies to negotiate conclusions and recommendations and work for a consensus which may undercut impartiality. Also, they have pointed out the tendency to “tone down” evaluation reports in the process of extensive review or in their preparation for high-level and external audiences. In addition, the users of evaluations have noted the need for a wider selection of consultants as evaluators to counter perceptions of overly close and continuing relationships of evaluators and their clients. Where recipient participation is considered essential to the credibility of donor evaluations, as the Principles specify but is rarely done in practice, then the review finds that member compliance is deficient. Generally, judging compliance in these areas is difficult, as the line between credible impartiality and working for the acceptance and use of evaluations is subtle, and not easily assessed.

Compliance with other Principles

As a detailed review of each Principle will be provided in Chapters 2 and 3, this section presents a short summary outlining the main results :

- *Usefulness:* Generally, Members expressed a positive opinion on the usefulness of evaluations. This is particularly true in the case of project evaluation as some action is undertaken to follow the recommendations. Nevertheless, there are some weaknesses related to *ex post* evaluations, as they are not always relevant, and in the case of evaluations of broad thematic subjects, collaboration with policy staff lacks.

- *Participation of donors and recipients:* Compliance with this Principle is seriously deficient. There are a number of factors related both to donors and recipients countries that impede successful application of this Principle. It is suggested to revisit it and better examine its application.
- *Evaluation programming and design and implementation of evaluation.* Generally, Members expressed a positive opinion. Nevertheless, the users of evaluation reports suggested that more transparency in design and implementation of evaluation should be attained by using logframes, indicators, and “success rating” systems.
- *Dissemination.* Generally, this was satisfactory (principally the distribution of reports and summaries). Nevertheless, Members pointed that little attention is paid to the demand, the use and usability of evaluations, and differentiation according to different audiences. Moreover, concerns were expressed with regard to the way in which lessons and experience, gained during the evaluation process, are transmitted to current operation managers.
- *Donor collaboration:* This was considered weak. Although there are some examples of successful collaboration, generally there was little enthusiasm for joint donor evaluations.

Finally, the question of decentralised evaluations and the role of central evaluation offices is only indirectly addressed by the DAC Principles. Results from their review showed that decentralised evaluations are especially useful but fall short on quality and impartiality and, thus, raise issues of compliance.

Concluding observations

Evaluations have proved to be most useful (apart from those tied to specific project operations) in situations where:

- they are linked to current and future programmes rather than historical perspectives, although the need for accountability asks for the continuous evaluation of older programmes;
- they provide opportunities for participation in drawing recommendations and designing future programmes/projects;
- they are timely, and complete; and,
- they are substantive, succinct and readable.

Evaluations will be used as an instrument to learn lessons for future operations, only if explicitly required by agency leaders. To promote their use, agencies need to create an environment based on organisational learning and ease access to evaluation results. In fact, the main obstacle to the use of evaluation as a learning instrument is the cost of searching for relevant information. “Just-in-time” practices will facilitate this task.

Usefulness of the Principles

Knowledge of the DAC Principles by the users is not widespread, although possibly more so now as a result of the user surveys. This may not be a matter of concern, as some have expressed, if an understanding of the Principles is, in fact, well established. As noted, this appears to be the case for the basic Principles of independence, impartiality and credibility. It is less the case for the other Principles, several of which relate to evaluation processes and practices. In a few instances, Members reported that the Principles has been helpful to them in developing agency policies on evaluation and in guiding their work.

Recommendations

This section covers recommendations from the reports. It is important to recognise at the outset that the Principles are highly interrelated. Thus, compliance with one Principle can affect, both positively and negatively, compliance with other Principles. The Principles of independence, impartiality, credibility, and usefulness underlie the effectiveness of the other dimensions of evaluation laid out in the Principles.

Applying the findings of Phases I and II

Over the past two years, Members have undertaken a unique and important evaluation exercise addressed at their own performance, for which they should be commended. This is in keeping with the best tradition of evaluation. In this process, all participating Members have had the opportunity to learn about the status of evaluation in their respective agencies.

Recommendation 1

If they have not already done so, Members are encouraged to develop a report on the conclusions and, where provided, the recommendations from their own two reports. These reports could take into account pertinent lessons from DAC reports. The reports would be for members' own use in guiding possible reforms in their evaluation operations.

Specifying best practices

Results from the Phases I and II of the review show that the DAC statement on the Principles for the Evaluation of Development Assistance is still valid. Nevertheless, it was pointed out that there is some room for improvement as in some respects it is out-of-date or ambiguous and could be made more relevant to current and future evaluation work. More precisely, it was suggested to:

- further elaborate the purpose of evaluation. Lack of clarity in purpose in agendas and design evaluations was the main concern;
- better address the question of trade-offs between the merits of independence and participation;

- specify special requirements for evaluations of themes, sectors, cross-cutting issues, and country programmes;
- clarify the role of evaluation in multi-donor support programmes, which were variously identified as national development programmes or sector investment (expenditure) programmes, and co-financing arrangements;
- better elaborate the responsibilities and functions of central evaluation offices for decentralised evaluation;
- add a section on success ratings, performance measurement and indicators, evaluation typology;
- specially treat Principles and practices that relate to organisational learning processes and the dissemination responsibility of the central evaluation offices;
- identify best practices to ensure that relevant lessons from past evaluation reports have been considered and addressed in each new proposal; and
- revisit the Principle of donor-recipient partnerships in evaluation. The Principle is sound, but there are some obstacles to Members' commitment to it, and best practices are needed to improve its implementation.

There are two alternative approaches which could be followed to address these concerns:

- leave the Principles, as it is with the understanding that Phases I and II of the review give guidance on how to improve compliance with the Principles;
- rewrite the Principles based on the findings of the reviews.

Neither of these approaches do justice to the considerable work undertaken by Members during the review of the DAC Principles. The first is difficult to apply as it lacks a focus on practices that Members could usefully and easily draw on -- a lesson from the review on usefulness. The second would fail to provide the guidance that Members would welcome on ways to apply the Principles and, thus, learn more fully from each others' experience. Neither would provide the opportunity to pull together the many innovations in evaluations of development assistance that Members have developed over the years since the Principles were adopted. Moreover, just as evaluations should be forward-looking, so should Principles and practices be viewed in the context of the role of development assistance in the 21st century. The Principles for evaluation is basically sound in its main features and will continue to be useful to members as they develop their evaluation systems. What may be more useful for Members is to elaborate on how the Principles have been, and can continue to be, best applied.

Recommendation 2

Leave the DAC Principles as they are and prepare a reference on best practices related to the main Principles and relevant topics provided in the DAC statement.

These best practices would be drawn from material in Phases I and II reviews, supplemented by information from Members who have found successful features in their evaluation and dissemination work that would be useful to other Members. This approach would also provide an opportunity to cover best practices related to recent developments in evaluation work, those not directly covered in the Principles and, most important, the participation of recipients in donor evaluation work. This last area may require some additional field work for determining best practices. By concentrating on developing a reference of best practices, Members will have the opportunity to advance the cause of evaluation in development assistance and facilitate improvements in each member's evaluation operations. Rather than attempting to prepare a reference covering all of the Principles in one exercise, Members could identify two or three of the most important ones to start on and phase-in the best practices on the others over an extended time period. A goal for completion could be the year 2000.

Evaluation and new assistance instruments

The reviews provided a preliminary insight into evaluations of new assistance instruments, primarily interest in arrangements variously called: the "programme approach" (UNDP), sector investment (expenditure) programmes (World Bank), often sub-sector programmes, "Sector Programme Support" (Danida), sector-wide assistance programmes or national development programmes which are not sector-bound but linked to specific national development objectives. This type of assistance arrangement varies significantly from traditional assistance programmes and projects. It places more emphasis on recipient country leadership, the pooling of multi-donor resources in a programme with a common objective and strategy, and broad participation of public and private, national and local community institutions. It minimises separate donor projects and is closely tied in with co-financing arrangements. In this type of programme, effective collaborative monitoring and evaluation systems that serve both country and donor interests and build up recipient capacities are especially important. What guidance can the DAC Evaluation Group provide for monitoring and evaluation of such programmes? It has the opportunity to help shape this approach towards development assistance and address a number of the concerns that evaluators have repeatedly cited in their reports.

Recommendation 3

Arrange for a special presentation at the next meeting of the DAC Evaluation Group on the sector/national programme approach for assistance activities to consider the question of the role for the monitoring and evaluation responsibilities of donors and recipients in such assistance modalities. This presentation and exchange should be followed up with the preparation of guidance on best practices for M&E, specifically addressing multi-donor sector programmes.

In their report on “Agenda Actions and Next Steps by the DAC Evaluation Group in support of the Strategy ‘Shaping the 21st Century’,” Members cite several initiatives. These include: conducting Joint Sector Assessments and Refining Analytical Tools for sector programmes. At the same time, the Special Programme of Assistance for Africa (SPA) -- with many of the same donor members as the DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation -- is deeply involved in the definition, design and practical implications of sector-wide assistance programmes (SWAP). These initiatives are important in the context of the 21st Century objectives. In the spirit of good co-ordination and the value-added the Evaluation Group can provide on monitoring and evaluation, it would be desirable for Members to be knowledgeable about the SPA and other similar donor initiatives. These initiatives have important implications for the Expert Group’s interest in approaches to sector evaluations, especially for monitoring and evaluation capacity building in recipient countries. An exchange of views and plans would be mutually beneficial. Several evaluations and studies (e.g. by The World Bank/OED, UNDP, UK, Germany, Sweden) are available to support such a presentation. Following this exchange, the Evaluation Group is encouraged to make an important contribution to donor practices by developing a policy and practice statement on M&E for multi-donor sector programming with particular attention to the role of the recipient country and related capacity building.

Annex 1: DAC Evaluation Group Members' Participation in Phases I and II Reviews

Country/International Organisation	Phase I: Self-Evaluation	Phase II: Survey of Users
Australia	X	
Austria	X	X
Belgium	X	X
Canada	X	X
Denmark	X	X
Finland	X	X
France	X	X
Germany	X	X
Ireland		
Italy	X	
Japan	X	X
Luxembourg		
New Zealand	X	
Netherlands	X	X
Norway	X	X
Portugal		
Spain		
Sweden	X	X
Switzerland	X	X
United Kingdom	X	X
United States	X	X
Asian Development Bank	X	X
African Development Bank		X
European Bank for Reconstruction & Development	X	
European Commission	X	X
Interamerican Development Bank	X	
International Monetary Fund		
United Nations Development Programme	X	X
World Bank	X	X

Chapter 2.

PHASE I: SYNTHESIS REPORT

Executive summary

This Chapter provides a synthesis of the review of DAC Members experience with the application of the DAC “Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance”. Its objectives were to examine the implementation and use of the Principles, assess their impact, usefulness and relevance, and make recommendations, where necessary, on changes to the Principles and to agencies. The review focuses on the questions of “compliance or non-compliance” with the Principles.

Results from the sixteen bilateral Members and six multilateral observers who responded to the questionnaire showed that the central evaluation offices have initiated approximately 6 500 evaluations since the Principles were adopted in December 1991. In addition, DAC Members reported that over 15 000 other evaluations had been initiated by other divisions and associate development assistance agencies; and they were aware of many more for which they had no official listings. Evaluations covered a wide range of traditional ongoing and mid-term projects, project and sector impacts, organisational situations and management operations, thematic studies, and a number of other types, which are summarised in the profile of evaluation activity.

Allowing for the relatively dynamic situations in Members’ evaluation operations and the differences in focus, it is reasonable to conclude that most Members are complying with, or working towards, compliance with the Principles. Some Members appear more rigorous and systematic in their compliance than others. However, compliance by the more rigorous also varied according to the Principles. On the whole, DAC Members can be regrouped into four broad categories according to the degree of compliance with the DAC Principles:

- those with well-established and relatively stable central evaluation operations carrying out high quality work;
- those with well-established central evaluation operations but experiencing major reforms as part of their agency's reorganisations or changes in development priorities, with the expectation of refocused and enhanced evaluation capacities;
- those that appear to be deteriorating in their compliance reflecting organisational shifts and lack of management support and resources for evaluation work;

- those who have little or no structured evaluation systems and capacities or who are just beginning to develop them -- possibly reflected by their disinclination to respond to the questionnaire.

According to respondents, the term “compliance” seems prescriptive and regulatory. The nature of the Principles does not lend itself to a strict interpretation of compliance, nor would Members wish to be judged accordingly. Compliance is judged more as a matter of responding to the spirit and intent of the Principles than precise applications. No judgement can be made about compliance for decentralised evaluations, i.e. those not carried out by central evaluation offices.

Responses to questions on *impartiality*, *independence* and *credibility* demonstrate that the central evaluation offices are mindful of the importance of these Principles and have applied them in their organisational and procedural arrangements. Concern for ensuring the *usefulness* of the evaluation reports is addressed by a variety of measures. The Principles related to *participation of donors and recipients*, and *donor co-operation* is fully appreciated in concept but has presented practical operating difficulties in its application.

The Principles for *evaluation programming* and the *design and implementation* of evaluations have not presented significant problems for the members, although there has been some variation in their application. Practices related to *reporting*, *dissemination* and *feedback* have followed the intent of the Principles, with differences in specific modes of implementing them and the degree of transparency adopted in disclosure policies. Many of the central evaluation offices do not have a significant role in decentralised evaluations. Available information on decentralisation practices suggest that they are properly used in decision making, although their quality differ from country to country.

The *Principles* has had an impact and continues to be relevant for many Members who have used them in developing their own policies and procedures. However, discussions of the Principles within donor organisations has been limited. The Principles have not been discussed with recipient countries individually, although they have been discussed in DAC regional seminars.

Recommendations relate to possible revisions of the Principles include:

- modifying the statement of purpose;
- clarifying the application of the Principles among the variety of evaluation activity, reflecting the balance that is required when applying the Principles;
- directly addressing the question of decentralised evaluations and participatory evaluations;
- elaborating more on the Principles and practices for recipient participation and donor co-operation; and
- introducing recent developments in evaluation activity such as performance measurement and success rating systems, and developing a typology of evaluation activity.

However, the question of revising the Principles, and how this can most usefully be accomplished, should be left open until the completion of the second phase, which will focused on the reviews of the users of evaluations. This will allow a more complete picture of the donors' evaluation systems.

It is suggested that some Members should use this report to guide improvements in their evaluation programmes, without waiting for the completion of the next phase. The report has the benefit of citing comparative experience and performance which can be useful for individual internal assessments by the Members.

Introduction

This Chapter responds to the first phase of the review of the DAC “Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance” and synthesises the main findings. This phase was based on a questionnaire for Members responsible for central evaluation, which was prepared to gain a better understanding on:

- compliance or non-compliance with the Principles and the reasons stated for this;
- the impact and usefulness since their adoption; and
- the relevance of the Principles, or sections thereof, in view of present policies, practices and organisational arrangements for evaluation².

This Chapter is based on responses from 16 bilateral donor members and 6 multilateral agency observers.³ A draft of this synthesis was circulated to Members prior to the April 1996 meeting of the Working Party on Aid Evaluation and discussed at the meeting. This final version takes into account both the comments made at the meeting and subsequent suggestions. In the spirit of the Principles, the aim of this Chapter is to provide information that is impartial, credible and useful to the Evaluation Group experience.

The Chapter is divided into three main parts: a) a brief statistical profile of the numbers and types of evaluations in OECD Member countries; b) an assessment of the DAC Principles; and c) recommendations regarding areas where the Principles might benefit from modification. The views expressed in the Chapter are those of the Members responsible for their particular evaluations and their experiences with the Principles, and therefore the entire review process is a form of self-evaluation.

In processing the questionnaire, it was noticed that responses to some of the questions would have required extensive and detailed examination of past evaluation reports and records. As this would have been time consuming and would not have completely served the propose, it was suggested to base responses on past experiences of seasoned evaluators.

Moreover, many of the responses raise interesting questions that would have been useful to further explore. Some of these questions would also have benefited from revision to help guide the responses. However, because of the short deadline for this survey, no attempt was made during the questionnaire process to clarify and elaborate.

² “Review of the DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance” [DCD/DAC/EV(95)10] and Terms of Reference for Consultant. December 5, 1995.

³ In this report the term “Member” applies to both multilateral and bilateral donor organisations participating in this DAC Evaluation Group review, unless otherwise indicated.

Profile of Members' evaluations, assessment overviews and recommendations

Profile of Member responsible for central evaluations

The central evaluation offices of 22 DAC Evaluation Group Members, 16 bilateral donors and 6 observers, responded to the questionnaire (see Table 1). The responses showed that the state of development and organisation of central evaluation units is highly varied among DAC Members. Some countries are in the process of developing and organising their evaluation systems for the first time; others are restructuring them, either separately or as part of an agency-wide reorganisation; some already have well-established operations. But more significant than differences in the state of development of evaluation practices, is the wide disparity of activities undertaken by evaluation offices.

Table 1. Members and observers of the DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation responding to the questionnaire on the Review of the DAC “Principles for the Evaluation of Development Assistance”

Australia	Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID)
Belgium	Administration Générale de la Coopération au Développement (AGDC)
Canada	Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)
Denmark	Danish International Development Assistance (DANIDA)
Finland	Ministry for Foreign Affairs
France	Ministry of Co-operation
Germany	Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development (BMZ)
Italy	Directorate-General for Development Co-operation
Japan	Economic Co-operation Bureau. MFA
Netherlands	Directorate-General for International Co-operation
New Zealand	Development Co-operation Bureau. MFA & T
Norway	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Sweden	Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (Sida)
Switzerland	Direction de la Coopération au Développement et de l'Aide Humanitaire (DDA)
United Kingdom	Overseas Development Administration (ODA)
United States	U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)
Asian Development Bank	
European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)	- Project Evaluation Department
European Commission	- Directorate-General for Development
Interamerican Development Bank (IADB)	- Evaluation Department
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	- Office of Evaluation and Strategic Planning (OESP)
World Bank	- Director General, Operations Evaluation

Source: OECD.

Central evaluation offices have initiated approximately 6 500 evaluations of all types since the Principles were adopted in December 1991⁴, and multilateral organisations account for about 43 per cent of the total. Other agency divisions, or separate government agencies, working in development assistance in Member countries have conducted several thousand evaluations, largely of ongoing projects, mid-term ones and some broader studies. (For those who gave figures, the total is over 15 000.) As the responsibility for evaluations is decentralised, Members tend not to have records of all evaluations which have recently been issued, or are underway, although they are aware that they have been conducted.

The range of evaluation work by Members is broad: from traditional ongoing project evaluations to assessments of development themes. Because of this wide variety of evaluation activities, categories that were indicated in the questionnaire were not always appropriate to classify all different activities. Members found that either some of their approaches were not taken into account or their databases did not contain relevant data. Moreover, as evaluation activity grows and adapts to changing development assistance roles, the types of evaluations are becoming more diverse.

While the terminology used in the questionnaire is relatively standard, there are varying definitions and interpretations. Members have different views on what should be included in each category. Taking the above limitations into account, the total 6 500 evaluation activities can be categorised as follows:

- *536 ongoing project evaluations:* These are carried out by the central evaluation offices.
- *2251 project completion reports:* These are both reviews of Project Completion Reports (PCRs) and preparations of PCRs by central evaluation offices -- about 80 per cent are carried out by multilateral organisations.
- *1405 impact evaluations:* These are the major activities of central evaluation offices.
- *168 sector impact evaluations.*
- *194 cross-cutting and multi-sector evaluations.*
- *45 emergency assistance evaluations.*
- *268 non-project assistance (NPA):* This category suffers from lack of definition. NPA usually refers to commodity and balance of payments aid, but some members assume that they are organisational studies.
- *93 evaluations of management operations.*

⁴ The figure 6 500 evaluations may overstate the actual number of evaluations conducted by central evaluation offices as there may be some duplication in the various categories. The statistics in this section are approximations providing a sense of magnitude of evaluation activity. In the absence of a member-by-member analysis of what has been included and what not, it is difficult to ensure complete consistency in reporting. The terms for each type of evaluation have different meanings to different Members.

- *59 joint evaluations with other donors:* some of these evaluations are also included in categories mentioned above. They have been carried out with other donors, mostly with the International Financial Institutions (IFIs).
- *856 joint evaluations with recipients:* Some of these evaluations are also included in the categories mentioned above. This category mainly includes evaluations developed under an *ex ante* collaborative arrangement between donors and recipient countries, which select experts on both sides and leave open the possibility to work together or separately. Other joint evaluation activities build on the participation of recipient countries to PCR preparation process. For example, half of these take place between multilateral organisations and the recipient country which participates in the PCR. However, more limited arrangements are also practised such as joint agreements on terms of reference (TORs) and reviewing of reports.
- *15 participatory evaluations:* These include evaluations with, or by, NGOs. Participatory evaluation is an area that needs better definition as it is not clear who, and how, different stakeholders participate in its process.
- *642 other:* This includes an assortment of evaluations such as performance audits, process evaluations of portfolio performance, country programme evaluations, thematic evaluations, self-evaluations, and lessons learned analyses. Members refer to other types of evaluation activity such as baseline studies at the start of projects, and evaluations of non-lending services.

Assessment overview

In reviewing the application of the Principles, it is important to bear in mind that the rich array and the volume of evaluation activities ask for flexibility to allow a certain degree of interpretation. This Chapter provides the general conclusions from this review, while more detailed presentations of DAC Members' responses and related analysis are provided in Appendix 1.

Compliance or non-compliance with the Principles

The Principles were adopted in December 1991. Since then, Members have had an opportunity to develop or adjust their evaluation practices in line with the Principles. Some Members are still in the formative stages of their central office evaluation operations; others are reforming them; and, for all, adjustments are constantly being made. Moreover, evaluation activities of central evaluation offices differ. Evaluation activities range from traditional ongoing and *ex post* project evaluations to broad thematic assessments, which involve many offices according to their project and thematic responsibilities.

Bearing in mind this relatively dynamic situation and differences in focus, and considering DAC Members' practices as a whole, it is reasonable to conclude *that most Members are complying with, or working towards, compliance with the Principles*. Some Members appear more rigorous and systematic in their compliance than others. However, compliance varied even by the more rigorous according to the Principles, as the "scoring" chart suggests in Table 2. In general, DAC Members can

be regrouped into four broad categories according to the degree of compliance with the DAC Principles:

1. those with well-established and relatively stable central evaluation operations carrying out high quality work;
2. those with well-established central evaluation operations but experiencing major reforms as part of their agency's reorganisation or changes in development priorities, with the expectation of refocused and enhanced evaluation capacities;
3. those that appear to be deteriorating in their compliance reflecting organisational shifts and lack of management support and resources for evaluation work;
4. those who have little or no structured evaluation systems and capacities, or who are just beginning to develop them. (Eight participants of the DAC Evaluation Group who received the questionnaire did not respond or informed the author that they were not in a position to do so. However, in two or three instances, Members with active evaluation units may not have wished to take the time to respond.)

It is important to notice that the term "compliance" seems prescriptive and regulatory to many members. The nature of the Principles leaves room for wide interpretation of what constitutes compliance. Therefore, Members would not wish to be judged accordingly. Moreover, a rigorous application of some Principles would compromise the application of others. Members outlined that compliance is a matter of seeking a balance amongst the various Principles, while bearing in mind the purpose of evaluation as a guide. Compliance, therefore, is more a matter of responding to the spirit and intent of the Principles than precise applications.

The following section summarises the main results and considerations on the degree of compliance with each DAC Principle.

Purpose of evaluation

Members find the statement on the purpose of evaluations either acceptable as it is, or acceptable with some improvements. Suggestions for improvement concern the importance of enriching the quality not only of future policies and programmes, but also of ongoing ones, and of promoting process-oriented and participatory approaches. More emphasis may be needed on evaluation as a management tool for decision-making to better accomplish ongoing projects. In this regard, it would be useful to explicitly address the question of decentralised evaluation work.

Some Members suggested that the purpose of evaluation could be broadened to include the goal of increasing knowledge about development assistance and its possibilities and limitations as an instrument of economic and social change. It could also refer to the recent and growing interest in performance measurement and in rating systems. Finally, the term "transition" referring to countries in the process of moving towards market economies could be added to encompass evaluation activities in the newly emerging recipients.

Members did not, however, suggest any major restatement of the purpose of evaluation.

Impartiality and independence

The Principles clearly state that “the evaluation process should be impartial and independent in its function from the process concerned with policy-making, the delivery and management of development assistance”. Impartiality and independence are closely inter-related concepts. In fact, the aim of impartiality is best achieved where evaluation activities are independent from operations personnel and managers who have interests in showing accomplishments and good performance. Impartiality also depends on the professionalism of evaluators and the methodology applied.

Some Members suggested that the independence Principle can be problematic. In fact, if evaluators are too independent, they may become distant from the users of evaluations, and work against the participation and ownership Principle. Therefore, it was suggested to introduce the term “objectivity” as it seemed more appropriate. This suggestion was not considered since this term does not address important organisational aspects implicit in the term “independence” and it is controversial with regard to evaluation practices.

Independence in evaluation is based on, and is obtained through, different organisational structures; access to and control over resources; review and revision of evaluation reports; linkage arrangements between different officials responsible; and agency policies on evaluation. The following section presents a general overview of the degree of independence reached in Member countries by analysing each of these features.

Most Members of the DAC Evaluation Group indicated that their central evaluation offices are separate from line operations, and they report either to the principal official of the agency or a board responsible for development assistance programmes. In the case of bilateral donors, central evaluation offices are organised according to the way development assistance programmes are ruled within the government structures: some are separate agencies, others are part of a larger agency such as a Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In some cases, evaluation offices report to a policy unit or similar entity which, in turn, reports to the head of the development agency.

In most Member countries, evaluation officers are selected and can be dismissed by the head of the agency, either with, or without, the Personnel Office. They may return to a different assignment in the agency after being dismissed from their evaluation tasks.

Independence is greater (such as in some IFIs) where the principal evaluation officer has: direct lines to a governing board or a head of agency; a fixed-term appointment; has no re-employment prospects, and cannot be removed except under exceptional circumstances. These arrangements are not common nor are a concern among bilateral aid agencies.

Access to, and control over, financial resources and evaluation programming is an important sign of independence. Freedom to select projects and approve evaluation programmes are desired to increase independence, but they need to be balanced with the requirements of managers and operating staff.

Most central evaluation offices have their budgets annually approved, and about half of them have the authority to select projects. Those who do not can propose projects for evaluation. Only heads of agencies, boards or a management committee have the authority to approve an evaluation programme. In some Member countries, TORs can be approved by evaluation units, while in others, they must seek the approval of line operations officers or senior management.

The process of reviews and revisions of evaluation reports is a critical phase for evaluations as impartiality and independence can be compromised. The process consists of procedures for reviewing and modifying evaluation reports, accepting or rejecting proposed changes, resolving disagreements, proposing conclusions and recommendations and citing authorship. The Principles do not explicitly address these specific aspects. Nevertheless, Members' experiences suggest the need to balance the aim of preserving the integrity of evaluation reports with the benefits of incorporating the views and suggestions of those responsible for a project, programme or policy.

The questionnaire cannot determine whether independence and impartiality have been preserved, while revising and adjusting evaluation reports to include the views of those responsible for projects, programmes or policies. However, it is interesting to note that Members reported many occasions where critical findings and recommendations were modified. This may be a sign of compromising impartiality, or it may be a case of good judgement intended to make a report more useful and effective -- a delicate distinction.

The existence of an explicit agency policy on evaluation reflects its importance and establishes the framework and context for independence and impartiality. Moreover, agency policy on evaluation is particularly important in establishing linkages between evaluation and policy-making. Most Members have such a policy. However, for some, they are only partial and not substantive as they only establish "office instructions" or "guidelines" on procedures to follow. Different kinds of linkage arrangements are put in place in Member countries but it is not possible to evaluate their effectiveness (a point touched on in the section on "usefulness").

From Members' responses, it is clear that they are mindful of the importance of the Principle of independence and impartiality and that they are responsive to it. However, the existence of structures, forms and procedures only partly fulfil the requirements stated in the Principle. Many Members consider that they are well established as far as structure and procedure are concerned, while others think that more may be required. However, the real test of "compliance" with this Principle lies in what actually takes place in the day-to-day informal exchanges and in the professional integrity of evaluators and managers.

Credibility

Credibility is, of course, affected by the independence and impartiality of evaluation units. It requires expertise, financial resources to attract expertise, and transparency. To gain credibility, it is important to report both successes and failures, back findings, and have recipient countries participate in the evaluation process.

Most Members stated that expertise and financial resources can raise concern, while only a few thought they were critical issues. However, Members' responses suggest that continuing attention is required to ensure that the expertise (staff and consultants) needed to evaluate all major programme areas is available within their agencies. It was stated that evaluation expertise may be more difficult to assure in some newer programme areas such as democracy and governance programmes, environment, and aspects of social processes. With few exceptions, budgets for central evaluation offices seem low, e.g. for many bilateral agencies they represent less than 1 per cent of the overall programme budget (e.g. ranging from 0.02 per cent to 2.8 per cent in multilateral agencies, which represents the higher end).

Credibility is also obtained by allowing transparency in the evaluation process, i.e. by assuring that it is as open as possible. Openness of the evaluation process within agencies is, of course, common among Members. However, there are some constraints related to policy or practical considerations and where senior management has preference. Access to the evaluation process for those outside the agency widely varies depending on which part of the evaluation process is concerned. For instance, most agencies publish their own evaluations reports, although they do not disclose primary evaluation products. Sometimes, agencies even prefer not to publish their evaluation reports as they might be politically sensitive.

Transparency in the process of revising reports directed to resolve divergence of opinions, can have a direct bearing on credibility. Most Members rely on team leaders to address suggested revisions or point out differences. However, they also noted that evaluation managers and other officers can be influential. Meetings of interested parties to reach a consensus are cited; this approach can result in the need for a careful balancing of usefulness and independence.

In fairness, successes and failures are generally reported. However, while some Members consistently address these features in all reports, others do not report all of them, or only rarely. Although there is no clear agreement on whether it is more useful to learn from successes or failures, the latter tends to be preferred.

Ensuring adequate documentation to back evaluation findings clearly affects credibility. Some countries stated that time constraints and lack of key data, particularly when cause/effect relationships need to be clarified, can be difficult.

The Principle of credibility emphasises the importance of recipient country participation. This point seems to be more a matter of presumption than experience or compliance. Members do not have much information on whether this is in fact the case. A few suggest that such participation has increased the credibility of their reports in the eyes of their managers. (The question of participation is covered more fully later.)

Usefulness

Judging usefulness is more a matter for users of evaluations than evaluators; therefore, it will be better analysed in phase II. However, compliance with the usefulness Principle can be considered with respect to the benefits of an evaluation process, timeliness, actions on recommendations, and easy access to information.

Among the benefits of the evaluation process, according to this Principle, are its contribution to clarifying objectives, improving communications, increasing learning, and laying the groundwork for follow-up action. About half the Members consider that they are successful in serving these purposes; others consider they are less successful, particularly if they made the distinction between improving communications and increasing learning. But, generally, the situation is mixed and differences are, perhaps, too subtle to assess.

Timeliness of reports and ease of access to findings and lessons learned are clearly priorities for Members in managing the evaluation process to ensure usefulness. Timeliness has not generally been a problem, although underestimation of the scope of a task and problems with recruitment, data and logistics are not uncommon. Members are using a wide variety of techniques for promoting ease of access to findings, lessons and recommendations to ensure their availability when needed.

A key test of usefulness, as pointed out by the Principles, is whether action is undertaken according to recommendations. Members report that action has generally been undertaken to enforce the recommendations, although there have been exceptions in some instances. Most of the action results in new or revised policy statements, revised operations manuals, or changes in programme design. However, the usefulness Principle has been challenged in the case of *ex post* evaluations -- a primary product of central evaluation units; as this tends to be “out-of-date”, the interests of programme and project managers have moved on to other development priorities.

The usefulness Principle is also questioned when evaluations attempt to reflect “the different interests and needs of the many parties involved in development co-operation”. This aim, it is pointed out, is not practical as evaluation studies cannot serve such a broad range of interests and still be effective.

A final point on usefulness relates to the extent to which the lessons from evaluations are internalised by operating personnel and managers and become part of their new conventional wisdom, policies and practices. The questionnaire and responses did not explicitly address this point, but, it is possible to assume it as a result of the access to lessons and other dissemination activities. This is a topic that needs to be pursued further.

Participation of donors and recipients

Have Members complied with the partnership Principle of both donors and recipients in the evaluation process? For the whole evaluation process, the conclusion is generally negative, although the Principle is recognised as important. This does not mean that officials, professional organisations or affected groups in recipient countries do not participate. Several Members report that participation takes place in field work, discussion of reports, and dissemination of findings. There are also some cases where donors are dedicated to engaging recipients throughout the evaluation process.

The limited compliance, however, with this Principle is mainly explained by recipient unwillingness to participate: time constraints and high costs; communications problems; increased complexities and delays, and, occasionally, political obstacles. Members are of a mixed mind and tend to be sceptical on whether participation in evaluations helps to build local capacities. Where integrated with other work on capacity building, as the Principles suggest, the results may be more significant. Finally, it is not clear whether the participation of recipient countries is effectively beneficial when evaluation covers a number of countries, is broadly thematic in scope, and/or covers programmes completed many years previously.

Donor co-operation

“Collaboration between donors is essential in order to learn from each other and to avoid duplication.” The application of this Principle takes a number of different forms. These include sharing reports and their findings and lessons, sharing evaluation plans, and joint evaluations.

Donors generally agree that the most effective way to share findings is to organise meetings where participants can directly communicate, as is the case in DAC Expert Groups. On the other hand, in recipient country co-ordination meetings, electronic access to each other's databases, and international conferences (presumably ones not specifically on evaluation topics of direct concern), were judged to be less effective. Sharing evaluation plans seems more desirable in concept than in

practice - some say that it is not possible. It was recognised that the exchanges of information and experience which normally take place at DAC Evaluation Group meetings help to improve donor co-operation. Joint evaluations have mostly been experienced by multilateral agencies, who expressed mixed views on their desirability. The experience has been found to be satisfactory for some, and unsatisfactory for others. Apparently, there is no great enthusiasm for joint evaluations among Members, as they are considered to be highly time and resource consuming with low returns. To improve joint evaluations, although it is expected to have limited results, it is suggested to make the purpose of the joint effort practical and specific; to identify one leader, one budget, one contract and to assure recipient participation.

Evaluation programming

“An overall plan must be developed by the agency for the evaluation of development assistance.” Members have adopted standard practices to comply with this Principle. These practices vary in accordance with the areas covered, timetables, and periodicity of the evaluations (e.g. annual, multi-year, or more *ad hoc* planning).

Multilateral aid, in-house management, non-project assistance, emergency assistance, and country effectiveness studies are covered with different levels of detail by Members. About half the Members have included evaluations on a more comprehensive scale that permit aggregation of results. Guidelines and standards for evaluations, particularly for project evaluations, are common, although their applications are not always consistent.

Some Members are concerned with evaluation coverage. They question what would constitute a reasonable number of projects to include in an evaluation programme when it is not possible to evaluate all of them. The Principles do not address this point.

Design and implementation of evaluations

The design and implementation Principle covers areas such as TORs, report coverage, and methodology. Overall, Members are relatively consistent in complying with the components of this Principle. They reported some strong and weak points in TORs, coverage of basic issues, and supporting information for conclusions and recommendations. However, these points do not represent major concerns in meeting the requirements of this Principle.

The Principle does not include any requirement to introduce performance measurement and rating systems, or to prepare evaluations which cover special programme interests. However, since the Principles were adopted, several Member countries have introduced techniques to measure and rate performance, and have taken the habit to report on issues such as gender, environment, and poverty, either in their evaluations or in special studies. Whether this Principle should be amended to cover these topics remains an open question.

Reporting, dissemination and feedback

“Dissemination and feedback must form a continuous and dynamic part of the evaluation process.” Members are conscientious about dissemination and feedback. They follow standard evaluation practices in the structure and coverage of their reports and they are concerned with clarity to avoid technical and bureaucratic language.

Some Members prefer to summarise recommendations in a separate section in the evaluation report. Others prefer not to report on lessons learned from the evaluation or to express ideas on possible follow-up action.

Integrating findings and recommendations into agency policies and programmes is the most important feature of this Principle. Members employ a variety of methods, among which the most common are requirements addressed to facilitating management responses and workshops and seminars for general staff.

Dissemination activities consist of the distribution of evaluation reports, either in their entirety, or as syntheses, or both, or as abstracts. Members have put in place different practices to assure transparency which depends on the openness of their public information and disclosure policies. For some, there are no restrictions; for others, there are some, particularly on the distribution of their evaluation report documents.

Decentralised evaluations systems

The Principles do not directly address the question of decentralised evaluation systems, although it is partially covered in the section on the usefulness Principle. (Many of the Principles are, of course, also relevant to these evaluations.) This is, in part, a consequence of the fact that central evaluation offices -- those represented on the DAC Evaluation Group -- do not have, for the most part, direct responsibility for decentralised evaluation activities. Many Members have little information on the volume of this work as it is carried out separately by other divisions or development assistance agencies which are independent. Moreover, the focus of central evaluation units is mostly on *ex post*, impact, and thematic special studies. Some linkage is provided where the central evaluation unit is involved with project completion reports.

Without attempting a comprehensive review of these systems, a number of questions were put forward to get a preliminary picture of this major dimension of evaluation in development assistance programmes. Members' responses indicate that, for most of them, evaluations are carried out by offices other than the central evaluation office. These offices are, however, involved in periodic reviews of the quality and use of these evaluations, less so in monitoring the way they are conducted, even less in overseeing the preparation of annual plans, and only a few in providing guidance and standards. Assistance is provided by most central evaluation units with advice, as requested, on TORs, selection of evaluators, methodology, training, and other services. In one or two instances the central unit may participate directly in these evaluations.

Members report that, on the one hand, the quality of these evaluations has been mixed but, on the other, they are well used in decision-making. Therefore, it would be desirable to have a more in-depth analysis of quality of decentralised evaluations.

Poor quality can negatively affect donor evaluation systems, especially if it concerns a large number of reports and if recommendations which are directed to improve ongoing projects are not properly formulated. In any event, it seems that the Principles should, at least, be more explicit on what Members' responsibilities are for decentralised evaluations.

One Member considered self-evaluation as a form of decentralised evaluation. This is a dimension of evaluation that may need to be included in the Principles?

The impact, usefulness and relevance of the Principles

From Members' responses to the questionnaire and other comments, it is clear that the DAC Expert Group's statement on the DAC "Principles for the Evaluation of Development Assistance" has had an impact and has been useful to many of them. Reviews of agency policies against the Principles have occurred entirely, or partially, in thirteen Member agencies. For these Members, agency management or boards have approved a policy statement; others have not, or are in the process of preparing one. A number of these member policy statements are new, dating from 1991 to 1996, when the Principles were first adopted by the DAC.

Twelve agencies have adjusted their policies to conform fully, or partially, with the Principles. The main adjustments in policies and procedures relate to: donor co-operation, usefulness, design and implementation of evaluations, and reporting and dissemination. However, viewing the DAC Evaluation Group membership as a whole, it is doubtful that the Principles has been used conscientiously, systematically and broadly within their agencies. The major gap being the failure to discuss the Principles with recipient countries outside of DAC regional meetings.

At the same time, it is important to observe that many of these Principles have been well-known for many years preceding their adoption by the DAC Expert Group. Well established evaluation offices have been following many of these practices for sometime. The Principles in 1991 was, to a large extent, a codification of best practices at the time and, as such, a useful guide for those still forming their evaluation operations. This review process, as some have reported, has obliged Members to take another look at their practices.

The Principles are still broadly relevant for evaluations of development assistance. Their relevance and usefulness might benefit from some updating to reflect new developments in development assistance programming and evaluation practice. This updating work could help to:

- improve coverage and specificity;
- sharpen language to distinguish between Principles and best practices;
- reduce some overlapping; and
- clarify the application of Principles in relation to project- and thematic-oriented evaluations and give greater attention to decentralised evaluation.

However, relevance and usefulness of the DAC Principles will be better understood when the second phase of this review, which will survey users of evaluations, is completed.

The use of the Principle would be enhanced if the statement, which has been reproduced in an attractive booklet -- *Development Assistance Manual: DAC Principles for Effective Aid. OECD 1992* -- were actively promoted by the members in their agencies and used as the basis for workshops and seminars. This initiative would also be helpful in informing officials and professional groups in the recipient countries.

Ratings of Member compliance with the DAC “Principles for the Evaluation of Development Assistance”

To summarise the conclusions of this review of compliance, a rating system for the main categories of the Principles, and the several components that define the compliance, has been prepared (See Table 2). This rating system is based on a qualitative scale; therefore, results are to be considered as a quick and indicative evaluation of compliance and a check list for Members to consider where applicable⁵. Table 2 provides four levels of ratings:

- **Good (G):** in compliance with the Principles with high standards of performance.
- **Satisfactory (S):** in compliance with some concerns although not major ones.
- **Partially satisfactory (P):** in compliance but with weaknesses in some parts.
- **Unsatisfactory (U):** not in compliance.

These ratings reflect the general situation for the majority of Members. To allow for variations among Members, two columns are provided: one for instances of a minority of Members with higher ratings than the majority, and one for instances of a minority of Members having lower ratings than the majority.

Revisions to the statement of Principles

Members have suggested a number of points in the statement of Principles that would benefit from modification and elaboration. These mainly relate to:

- modifying the statement of purpose (see earlier discussion on this);
- clarifying the application of these Principles in relation to traditional project evaluations and to the broad non-project and thematic studies;
- reflecting the balance that is required when applying such Principles as independence and participation;
- directly addressing questions of decentralised evaluation, self-evaluation and participatory evaluation;
- more fully elaborating on Principles and practices for recipient participation and donor collaboration;

⁵ The detailed analysis of the questionnaires that supports these ratings is provided in Appendix 1.

- introducing some of the more recent developments in evaluations, such as performance measurement and success rating systems; and
- developing a typology of evaluation activity.

At this stage of the revision process, it was decided to await the results of the second phase on the survey of users of evaluation, before proceeding with the revision of the Principles.

Taking steps to improve compliance

Without waiting for the completion of the next phase, some Members may wish to use this report and the “scoring” chart as a check list to guide their own efforts at determining the extent of their compliance with the Principles to guide improvements in their evaluation programmes. The report has the benefit of citing comparative experience and performance which can be useful for Members’ separate, individual internal assessments.

Table 2. **Rating of member compliance with the DAC “Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance”**

Ref.	Principle	Group rating	Instances of higher rated exceptions	Instances of lower rated exceptions
11-17	Impartiality and Independence	P	X	
	Policy statement on evaluation	S	X	X
	Organisational relationships	P	X	X
	Selection/fixed term/removal/re-employment chief evaluation	U	X	
	Separate budget for evaluation	G		X
	Selection of projects to be evaluated	P	X	
	Selection of evaluators	G		X
	Approval on an evaluation programme	P		
	Preparation/approval of TORs	G		X
	Review and revisions	P		X
	Reports in evaluators name	P	X	X
	Linkage to decision-making	S	X	X
18-20	Credibility	S		
	Critical mass of evaluation staff expertise & consultants for topic coverage	G		X
	Staff resources re workload	P	X	X
	Reporting successes and failures	G		
	Supporting documentation	S	X	
	Resolving differences	P	X	X
	Transparency	S	X	X
	Recipient country participation and credibility	U	X	
	Usefulness	S		
	Benefits of the evaluation process	G		
	Actions on recommendations	S	X	X
	Timeliness	G		X
	Ease of access to evaluations reports - physical	S		
	Provides section on lessons learned	S	X	X
	During stages of projects execution (for central evaluation offices only)	U	X	
23-25	Participation of donors and recipients - joint involvement in evaluations	P		
	Participation of recipient country officials	P	X	X
26	Donor co-operation	P		
	Joint evaluations	P	X	X

Ref.	Principle	Group rating	Instances of higher rated exceptions	Instances of lower rated exceptions
	Sharing evaluation plans	U	X	X
27-31	Evaluation programming	S		
	Evaluation plans	G		
	Evaluation plan approvals	S		
	Evaluation guidelines & standards	P		
32-36	Design and implementation of evaluations	G		
	TORs	G		
	Coverage of basic issues	G		
	Evaluation methods and techniques	G		
	Logframes and indicators	P		X
	Success rating systems *	U	X	
	Special programme interests *	P		
39-43	Reporting, dissemination, feedback	S		
	Report clarity and coverage	G		
	Dissemination	S	X	X
	Feedback	S		
no ref.	Decentralised evaluation systems - oversight role of central evaluation offices *	S		
	Quality of decentralised evaluations	P		
	Use in decision-making	G		
44	Application of these Principles and follow-up	P		
	Agency statements	S	X	X
	Discussion of Principles with management and staff	P		X
	Discussion of Principles with recipient countries	U	X	

Key for group compliance:

G Good.
S Satisfactory.
P Partially Satisfactory.
U Unsatisfactory.

Higher and lower ratings:

X Refers to instances of Members who vary significantly -- higher or lower -- from the composite rating for the majority of the group.

***** Refers to topics not covered in the statement of Principles

Chapter 3.

PHASE II: SYNTHESIS REPORT

Introduction

The second phase of the review of DAC “Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance” focused on the views of the users of evaluations that have been produced by the central evaluation offices. It provided an opportunity to analyse decentralised evaluations and to collect views from recipient countries. This report provides the synthesis of the surveys of users of evaluation.

Three options on how to proceed with the survey were presented to Members. According to a summary of the responses and coverage of the nineteen participating members: nine undertook option 1: the “recommended” approach; five followed option 2: “recently completed survey” (or other special studies); four chose the “limited assessment” approach; and one provided a staff note (see Appendix 4 for more details). Within these categories there is some variation in approach and coverage. The variations did not constrain the synthesis but rather provided a richer perspective on specific aspects of the Principles.

Members of the DAC Evaluation Group on Aid Evaluation were urged to use the occasion of the survey of users of evaluation to assess the views of the recipients. Members agreed that this is an important dimension of their work, as it has been evident for example, in the many regional conferences on evaluation the Group has sponsored and has planned. The survey guide included a questionnaire to be used with recipient country officials.

The survey of users of evaluations, including recipient country users, focused on: the users’ knowledge of the evaluation work of the central evaluation offices; their participation in evaluation processes; the quality of the evaluation products; the relevance and usefulness of the products of evaluation; the impact of evaluations and their recommendations and lessons; the views of representatives of partner countries; and an overview assessment of the users awareness of the DAC Principles and the performance of the central evaluation offices on matters of independence and impartiality, organisational relationships and capacities, cost-effectiveness, adequacy of the agency’s attention to evaluation.

The main categories of users of evaluations who have been interviewed by member surveys include: agency senior management; agency operations staffs; agency technical staff -- individual and focus group interviews; selected individuals in legislatures, boards of directors, the media or other key positions; selected representatives of implementing organisations; selected representatives of overseas missions and recipient countries. While informative, the results of the surveys of recipients’ views are very preliminary, largely second hand, and too limited in coverage to be meaningful. A different approach is required to obtain an adequate understanding of recipient views.

Knowledge of evaluation work of central evaluation offices

Generally, those interviewed were familiar with the work and products of the central evaluation units -- more the products and than the annual evaluation plans. However, there are many gradations of knowledge depending on positions, responsibilities, length of service, and workloads. Senior managers were generally knowledgeable about their agency's evaluation programme. However, they do not actively look for evaluation information and make the linkage between evaluations and policy decision-making. They see evaluation's role as primarily providing transparency and accountability rather than a constructive contribution to the management's work.

Participation in evaluations

In general, the annual planning process is not an area of major concern among the users of evaluations. However, most members have well established procedures for the annual evaluation plans calling for senior management approvals. Participation in the choice of topics to be included in the plans is more variable. A common concern is that the process is not transparent; operating staff suggestions are not considered. On the other hand, senior management suggestions are normally included.

Apart from annual evaluation planning, the extent of participation in an agency's evaluation processes is directly related to relevance to one's work. Most interviewees responsible for specific projects or programmes have had an opportunity (not always taken into account) to comment on terms of reference, and, to a considerably lesser extent, on choice of evaluators and other aspects of the implementation. At the level of cross-cutting, sector, country or thematic evaluations, officials in policy roles, for some members, participate in the early planning of the evaluations, but others have expressed concerns that they are not adequately consulted—a point of tension related to the independence principle.

On the contrary, users usually participate to the reviews of draft reports and formulation of conclusions and recommendations. This is standard practice in all evaluation operations. Those users who commented on this step in the evaluation process found it to be beneficial and instructive and, perhaps, the main opportunity to learn from agency experience. However, differences come in the elaborateness of the review process. A second opportunity occurs in some agencies when staff participate in senior management meetings to review conclusions and recommendations and determine follow-up actions. Some have noted that in the review process evaluators may be either pressed to accommodate management's interests or situations where the reports are too "polite" or too qualified thus blurring the message.

Quality of evaluation products

Although none of the interviewees had read all of the reports or rarely all of any one, they still were able to conclude that the quality of the evaluation reports was satisfactory; some were excellent, others less so but none were cited as unsatisfactory. However, as the interviewers probed more deeply on aspects of quality a number of positive and negative comments became evident. These views, of course, varied with the position of the interviewee.

Many Member's reports supported the idea that the choice of evaluators is not always the optimal as the "the circle of consultants is very closed". The incorporation of a range of differing views and experience to bring fresh perspectives is healthy in evaluation work.

The relevance and usefulness of the products of evaluation

The question of relevance and usefulness is complex. Users of evaluation reports cover different positions, and therefore demand for disparate information according to Ministry policy and sector/thematic documents, budgets, country plans, and programmes and projects. The significance of evaluations depends on the interests and needs of the users, the timing of the reports, and external events that are largely unexpected but generate an interest in the results of evaluations.

Understanding the purpose of evaluations is a key consideration throughout the evaluation process as it shapes the analysis and the users' interpretation of the findings and recommendations and, thus, their views on usefulness.

Single project evaluations are rarely criticised for their relevance where they respond to current programme decisions. Long-term evaluations such as impact evaluations, project completion reports and their audits and some programme studies are more frequently challenged for their relevance as they are less timely and not linked to current agendas. While they may serve to answer "how have we been doing", the database is dated and thus the conclusions historical.

There are a number of practical considerations that most interviewees cited as affecting the usefulness of evaluations. Common concerns relate to: reports that are too voluminous and not readable; summaries that are not clear and crisp; product that cannot serve different audiences—the emphases and editorial styles need to fit the audience; access to pertinent information such as best practices or lessons learned when needed that is not easy—costs of the search are too high.

A major point bearing on the usefulness of evaluations is the question of demand. Several Members noted that the use of products of evaluations is highly dependent on the interests of management. Has management signalled its wish to have results of evaluations and their lessons fed into the design of new projects, programmes and policies? Without this signal with appropriate follow-up, the use of the evaluations is minimal in its impact on agency decision-making.

Impact of evaluations

A common conclusion of the surveys is that the impact at the project level is greater than at programme and policy levels of an agency's operations. This applies only where a specific project has been evaluated with recommendations for future action. It does not apply to the use of lessons learned at the project level drawn from syntheses of project evaluations or other studies. Operating staffs tend not to be well informed about or make use of lessons learned based on comprehensive reviews of agency experience, although there is some suggestion that these lessons filter into staff understandings as new common knowledge from various sources. It is difficult to sort out learning from other sources. Yet, another view suggests that there is more impact than it appears or is acknowledged, more learning than is realised or admitted to.

Awareness and understanding of the DAC Principles for Evaluation

Members report that there is little acquaintance with the DAC Principles for Evaluation. In a few instances, but very few, the interviewee has read the DAC Principles. However, the more important point is awareness of the principles in their own right and how central evaluation offices are perceived to conform to them.

The focus of the analysis in the surveys was on the principles related to purpose, independence, impartiality, and credibility. While accepting the importance of these principles, differences in interpretation and application were apparent in the responses. The importance of independence and impartiality for the evaluation function was fully recognised and supported by the interviewees. At the same time, there were expressions of concern that an over-emphasis on independence compromised efforts at achieving acceptance and ownership of lessons.

Assessment of experience with decentralised evaluations

For the most part, the central evaluation units are not involved in decentralised evaluations, which include mid-term evaluations, project completion reports, and occasionally special studies. In some instances, the central units may monitor these evaluations, provide technical advice on methods and TORs and prepare syntheses of groups of the decentralised evaluations. The DAC Principles do not address decentralised evaluations directly, although many of the principles are equally relevant to the decentralised evaluations.

Despite this separation of decentralised evaluations from central evaluation units, the project evaluations undertaken by operating units and implementing agencies represent a major volume of agency evaluation work and play an important and on-going role in efforts to improve the quality of development assistance programmes.

The views of the recipient countries

Information on the views of recipient countries as users of evaluations is limited. Many of the members were faced with time and resource constraints that prevented them from addressing this topic systematically. Generally, except for persons who have been directly involved in (donor) evaluations, the knowledge of (donor) evaluations is limited. Even those involved had not seen the final evaluation reports. A meaningful analysis of their views requires a specially designed approach that was not possible to include in this survey guide.

Summary overview

From looking at the reports as a whole, it is evident that central evaluation offices are respected for their independence and impartiality and are considered an essential part of the management of development assistance programmes. For some members this respect is well established; for others it is emerging. Also the quality of reports is not a dominant issue. These positive views need to be qualified. Some of the conclusions, pointing to areas of concern, relate to the relevance and usefulness of evaluation work, particularly to senior managers and policy makers with a general conclusion that the impact of the evaluations in some agencies is minimal. Weaknesses in dissemination and integrating lessons learned in operations is also a major concern.

The DAC Principles document has had few readers and the principles as they are stated in the DAC document are not well known. However, the principles, primarily those related to independence, impartiality, and credibility, are recognised as part of the evaluation culture.

Decentralised evaluations are considered to be more relevant and useful for the operating staffs than the products of central evaluations units; yet they are, at best, of mixed quality and are open to challenges on impartiality.

The adequacy of dissemination practices of central evaluation units is a major concern in Members' surveys. This is not just a matter of turning out shorter, more readable reports and improving access. There are a great number of other factors indicated in the reports. Two stand out as particularly important, assuming that the evaluations are basically well done.

First, the reports stressed the importance of the demand. Does senior management state and enforce its interest in following up on recommendations and applying lessons learned? The second factor that is vital in achieving impact from evaluations comes under the heading of dissemination -- the supply side of the evaluation function. In this context, dissemination is an umbrella term that covers a wide range of activities related to getting the message out: well written concise reports, use of summaries, adaptations of summaries to different audiences, dissemination mechanisms, and accessibility with "just in time" information services -- reducing the costs to the user of searching and applying lessons from evaluations.

Beyond the demand and supply features of evaluations, as some have reported, is the importance of having a "learning culture" or more narrowly an "evaluation culture" in the organisation.

Improved approaches to evaluations and new directions

Some members suggested some topics for further consideration. As evaluations move into broader topics with political implications, users in all categories would appreciate a more structured way of assessing user needs before preparing the evaluation programme. In new fields such as conflict prevention, conflict management, and rehabilitation, evaluators should try to support policy makers, management and staff as quickly as possible. The purpose would be to get an understanding of what has been learned about particular themes or policies, what has not been learned, and areas of disagreement.

Generally, as evaluators take on evaluations in the broader areas of sector and themes, there may be a need to reconsider how the principles apply and what modifications to the principles may be necessary to have a greater impact at the policy and senior management levels of their agencies. With this regard, one report observed that the context for evaluation work has been changing. In the reorientation of development assistance work, more attention is being given to overarching objectives of poverty reduction, governance issues (elections, role of civil societies, human rights), to the cross-cutting themes of women in development, the environment, to major collaborative evaluations of international emergency and multi-donor programmes, the expanded roles of NGOs, and to new instruments of assistance such as sector support (investment, expenditure) programmes. Taking on these subjects raises questions of close collaboration with technical and policy staffs at the planning stage, the professional capacities of the evaluation staff and evaluators relative to these broader interests, and the timing requirements to permit the results of evaluations to be fed into policy work before it is completed.

Appendix 1.

PHASE I: RESULTS FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction

This Chapter contains a detailed analysis of responses to the questionnaire sent to Members of the DAC Evaluation Group on Aid Evaluation. The questionnaire aimed to evaluate compliance with the DAC “Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance”.

The Principles are introduced by a definition of evaluation, and a background concerning their origin. This introduction describes the debate on evaluation, which is contained in other DAC documents on the management of development assistance, and summarises the main themes underling the Principles for evaluating development assistance. The questionnaire and this report do not address this part of the Principles’ statement.

This Chapter, in presenting the results of the questionnaire, will follow the structure of the DAC Principles, section by section. Each section will present a short introduction to each of the Principles and a synthesis of their evaluation. There will be a short addition on decentralised evaluations in section 11.

Purpose of evaluation

As stated in the Principles, “The main purposes of evaluation are:

- to improve future aid policy, programmes and projects through feedback of lessons learned;
- to provide a basis for accountability, including the provision of information to the public.” (Paragraph 6 in the Principles.⁶)

Through the evaluation of failures as well as successes, valuable information is generated which, if properly fed back, can improve future aid programmes and projects. Funds for development purposes are scarce compared to needs, and stakeholders in donor and recipient countries should be able to draw to the fullest possible extent on experience to optimise resource use (7). The accountability notion of evaluation referred to here relates to developmental results and impact of development assistance. It is distinct from accountability for the use of public funds in an accounting and legal sense, responsibility for the latter usually being assigned to an audit institution. Information

⁶ Numbers in parenthesis refer to paragraph numbers in the DAC “Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance”.

about the results of development assistance should be provided to the public and their leaders in both donor and recipient countries (8).

An important purpose of evaluation is to bring to the attention of policy-makers constraints on developmental aid success resulting from policy shortcomings or rigidities both on the donor and recipient side, inadequate co-ordination, and the effectiveness of other practices, such as procurement (9).

Evaluation promotes dialogue and improves co-operation between participants in the development process through mutual sharing of experiences at all levels.”(10).

About half the Members (12) are “in complete agreement (no changes)” with this statement on the purpose of evaluation of development assistance. None of the Members suggest that the text on the purpose of evaluation needs major restatement.

Some Members (9), however, suggest the need for modifications as follows:

- to improve quality in ongoing and future policies, programmes and projects through process- oriented approaches and feedback of lessons learnt.” (underlined phrases are the suggested changes) (suggested by SDC);
- add another purpose (or sharpen the first) to emphasise that evaluation serves immediate decision-making as a management tool to improve the quality of ongoing programmes and projects assuring that views of the stakeholders are sought (suggested by UNDP);
- a third objective that has been adopted by one Member refers to the development of knowledge: “To contribute to a better understanding of fundamental processes and events. Evaluations should increase one’s knowledge of development assistance and its possibilities and limitations as an instrument of economic and social change.” (suggested by SIDA, Sweden);
- the last sentence in the purpose statement could emphasise that donor/recipient dialogue and improved co-operation are most likely achieved if the process is participatory, to avoid the traditional sense of viewing evaluation as “auditing” (suggested by New Zealand);
- the statement should include some reference to performance measurement (suggested by UKODA, UK);
- questions have been raised about the statement of purpose as it relates to evaluations of ongoing projects carried out by line operation divisions or other implementing agencies.
- the term “transition” referring to the process towards market economies should be added to the purpose statement to broaden the scope of DAC Members’ evaluation activities, with particular relevance to the newly emerging recipients of development aid in the former Soviet Union (FSU) and Central Asia (suggested by EBRD).

CIDA (Canada), while accepting the statement as reasonable, has found some of the phrasing awkward, such as “feedback of lessons learned”. Perhaps more concrete phrases like “better decision-making” and “better project design” should be used. Also, the following sentence is

found awkward: “It is distinct from accountability for the use of public funds in an accounting and legal sense”, a distinction that is doubtful in the end.

EBRD suggests that the terms “development assistance”, “development impact”, and “development effectiveness” may need to be interpreted differently when applied to programmes aimed at the development of market-oriented economies and direct (no recourse) assistance to private enterprises.

The Netherlands raises the interesting question about the different approaches used by policy-makers and evaluators in addressing a topic or issue. The former views policy-making as a negotiating process; the latter as a rational one. As a consequence, policy-makers may not be open to making maximum use of the results of evaluations.

Finally, Finland points out that the role and responsibilities of recipient countries have been strengthened during past years. This change should also be reflected in the purpose statement for evaluation policy.

Impartiality and Independence

Principle 3: “The evaluation process should be impartial and independent in its function from the process concerned with the policy-making, the delivery, and the management of development assistance.”(11)

The statement on impartiality and independence points out that:

- “impartiality contributes to the credibility of evaluation and avoidance of bias...”;
- “independence provides legitimacy to evaluation and reduces the potential for conflict of interest...” such as separation of evaluation work from line management.

Three aspects of this Principle are emphasised: (i) developing a policy and set of guidelines for evaluation; (ii) ensuring impartiality and independence; and (iii) linking evaluations findings to future activities. Strengthening one, however, may be at the expense of the other, therefore, a balance should be sought. In applying these Principles, Members addressed a number of questions of institutional structure and management processes for evaluation work. It is important to keep in mind that responses are mainly associated with the work of central evaluation units and not decentralised evaluations.

Independence of the evaluation units

In the questionnaire, the first set of questions examine the degree of independence of both evaluation units, and their heads, by investigating the existing reporting systems and relationships, the terms of reference for the appointment of the head of the evaluation unit, his re-employability, his authority on a separate budget, and freedom in the choice of projects and subjects to be evaluated, TORs, and evaluators.

The answers showed that almost all principal evaluation officers report to the head of their development assistance agency and/or a governing board. Differences in the structure of the

development agency, e.g. whether it is a part of a larger organisation such as a Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or a separate agency, affect the organisation of the reporting systems. In a few instances, the evaluation unit reports to the head of a policy bureau or management committee. None report to senior line (operations) management. The UKODA, (UK), notes that the chief evaluation officer reports to the Principal Finance Officer and comments that “ODA’s ex post evaluation programme is widely noted for its degree of independence.”

In those instances where the principal evaluation officer reports to a governing board, the chief evaluator’s independence is better ensured. Heads of agencies may be less supportive of the independence Principle as they are usually at the top of line management.

Independence does not only depend on the organisational structure, but also on the attitudes which top management express towards evaluation, and the competence and expertise of the chief evaluator. The Principles are somewhat flexible on these points giving some latitude for compliance. The comments from the IDB are an instructive example: “the position of the Evaluation Office’s (EVO) Director is unique. He answers to the Board of Directors but reports to both the Board and the President of the Bank. The Office is very independent. It has recently gained additional independence with the dual reporting to the Board and President; answering to two corporate clients, it is not “used or owned” by either one. This allows the evaluations to cover the full spectrum of Board and Management activities. The Office is not limited in any way in its specific mission. In addition, the independence provides opportunity to comment on decisions of the Board as well as of Management”.

The chief evaluation officer is, in many instances (14), selected and can be dismissed by the head of the agency or governing board. In others (8), the Personnel Departments, alone or with senior management, or an executive committee are responsible for this position. Only in some of the IFIs has the head of evaluation a fixed-term assignment and cannot return to other employment in the agency once it is terminated, although this position can in some cases be revised. For bilateral agencies, the chief evaluation position does not seem to be a concern, although it may affect their independence and/or image of independence.

For most Members (20), evaluation units have their own yearly authorised budgets to administer. Having a separate budget under the control of the head of the evaluation unit is an important sign of independence. Budgets for ongoing and mid-term evaluations are usually included in project funding in decentralised evaluation systems; however, in some instances these funds can be available to the central evaluation office.

The ability to select which projects to evaluate and to approve an evaluation programme is, on the one hand, a good sign of independence but, on the other hand, may affect the usefulness and relevance of evaluations: management should also have a role in the selection process for evaluations. Many of the members (14) have the authority to select projects for evaluation, while only some have the authority to approve an evaluation.

Many Members (14) do not have the authority to approve an evaluation programme. In this cases, while the evaluation units propose the evaluation programme, often after consultation with operations staff, approval of the programme is under the responsibility of the agency head, governing board, or a management committee.

Similarly, independent authority to develop and approve the terms of reference for an evaluation and to select the evaluators who carry it out are a sign of independence. This is the case

for most Members (16). Several (6) point out that they do not have full authority, as they have to participate in the review of the TORs, selections with line operations and senior management, but they need to obtain the approval of a senior manager. However, the degree of independence varies widely amongst Members with respect to the level of delegation sought within the organisation.

Policy statement on evaluation

The Principles state the need for a policy statement on evaluation directed toward defining and establishing organisational relationships, openness of the evaluation process, and the dissemination of results. Many Members (14) have such a statement; for some (7), these statements are only partial, or the policies are very general as part of office instructions or official guidelines. For a few, policy statements are being developed in conjunction with the organisation or reform of the evaluation function (see paragraph 12 for a more detailed analysis of these results).

Review and revisions process

This stage in the evaluation process is critical to ensuring independence and impartiality but also usefulness and relevance. Procedures for reviewing and modifying evaluation reports, accepting or rejecting proposed changes, resolving disagreements, putting forth conclusions and recommendations to agency management, and citing authorship are all important to preserving the integrity of evaluation work and yet particularly vulnerable to pressures to alter the findings, conclusions, and supporting data. The responsible desk officers, line managers, and technical personnel have an opportunity to review and comment on Members' evaluations -- an essential and reasonable step leading towards changes in reports. In general, revisions primarily concern corrections of facts and figures. However, there are some cases where critical findings have been modified and toned down (8), positive observations and findings added (6), new material added (15) and recommendations modified (6).

From Members' many additional comments, it is clear that changes are, in general, for the purpose of addressing omissions, imbalances, correcting or updating facts, and addressing misunderstandings. New Zealand notes that the real interest in this process is to understand how to present the required follow-up action and recommendations and to facilitate relevant stakeholders, especially partner countries, in accepting and implementing them. Canada points out that, in general, Programme and Project managers comment on evaluation findings, which are subsequently modified in light of these comments. This is generally an iterative process as the evaluation proceeds rather than focused on a response to a completed report, therefore it is impossible to account for all modifications.

These several observations on the review and revision process leave open the question as to whether the independence and integrity of evaluations are compromised. Without reviewing each case, it is difficult to make a judgement. However, it is possible to conclude that such changes are not necessarily a weakness in the system as long as the integrity of the evaluations in their main conclusions and recommendations is preserved.

An important aspect of the review and revision process is who has the authority to accept or reject suggested revisions. This responsibility is not as clear-cut as might be expected. For some Members, the authority lies with the author, while for others it is with the evaluation office head and,

occasionally, with senior management. Of course, the manager of a specific evaluation can be quite influential.

It is also important to analyse how Members have handled situations in which different stakeholders were in disagreement over the conclusions or recommendations of the evaluation. Responses show that negotiation to reach mutually acceptable language is the most common practice. Alternatively, Members prepare a separate official statement of objections.

In a few instances, Members note that objections were not taken into consideration. This can lead to circumstances where the report is not completed or recommendations not carried out -- not necessarily a failure if the evaluators consider themselves unfairly compromised.

As emphasised by the Principles in the statement: “independence of evaluations can be further enhanced where reports are issued in the name of the authors”. Most (14) of Members consider this statement valid; some (4) questionable; and, for one, valid only in special cases. In practice, most Members (14) indicate that reports are issued in the name of the authors (or cite them); while three Members do it for some reports, and three, “never”.

Several Members make the point that the reports are issued in the name of the evaluation office and authors are referred to only in a preface or annex on methodology. Where authors are prominent, the use of a disclaimer may also be included in the report. The World Bank/Operations Evaluation Department (OED) comments that “most reports include the names of the principal evaluators. However, the reports also bear the imprint of the OED which ensures quality control and integrity of the findings and recommendations”. These are the main practices but it is clear that there are a number of variations depending on the type of report and circumstances of its preparation.

Linking evaluation findings to programming and policy-making

The Principles stress that, whatever the organisational structures for the evaluation function are, they should “facilitate the linking between evaluation findings and programming and policy-making.” Most Members (14) reply that the organisational structures fulfil this requirement, while for some (8), the linkages are limited. They ensure this linkage by: making available lessons and recommendations to relevant desk officers; using a management response system and transparent policy ledger; using audit committees, allowing the participation of evaluation units in agency committees, e.g. project reviews; submitting lessons and recommendations to the minister or agency head and on to the board or the legislature for discussion, and closing ties with those drafting policies. Agency management, in general, express their view on conclusions and recommendations, which need to be correctly presented to create a good linkage among all stakeholders. For about half the Members (12), these views are included either in the report or as a separate memorandum. However, a large number of Members (10) have not put in place a standard procedure as they prefer to treat each report on an *ad hoc* basis, depending on the situation or issue.

A common practice is to consider as official responses of agency management, the records of management or board meetings in which conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation are discussed. Others note that responses, if any, only become evident as policies are revised.

General observations on independence and impartiality

Some Members affirm their confidence in their organisational structure to guarantee independence, quality controls to ensure the integrity of the evaluation process. Some concern was expressed with regard to the danger that independence and impartiality can bring about distance, remoteness, and lack of involvement which can make feedback difficult and weaken the stakeholder ownership of findings and recommendations.

The involvement of the programme manager and partner country in the evaluation process is considered as critical if changes are to occur. Independence in these situations is achieved by having some Members of the evaluation team (possibly from the evaluation office) remaining distant from programme management.

A preference for the term “objectivity” over independence is indicated to separate value judgements from statements of fact, which are based on trustworthy methods of observation and inference. However, the use of the term “objectivity” is controversial. These concerns are particularly relevant for participatory evaluations. The text for the Principles may need to be revised to reflect these perspectives. One Member notes that the phrase “independence from the process...” is vague and unclear.

Credibility

Principle 4: “The credibility of evaluation depends on the expertise and independence of the evaluators and the degree of transparency of the evaluation process.

Credibility requires that evaluations should report successes as well as failures. Recipient countries should, as a rule, fully participate in evaluation in order to promote credibility and commitment.” (18)

A critical mass of evaluation expertise

The questionnaire asked whether evaluation offices have a “critical mass” of professional evaluators (evaluation managers and staff in their offices) to establish confidence in the credibility of reports in all the programme areas of the agency’s development activities. Only two Members reported having the required staff for all programme areas. Eleven Members have been able to cover the important programme, while 6 indicated having had shortages in some key areas. Three indicated that they have been inadequately staffed.

This capacity, of course, changes when consultants (external) are added to form the “critical mass”. In this case, eighteen Members declare to have had access to a recognised pool of evaluation specialists in either all, or the important areas of their work. However, a few (4) have experienced shortages of consultants in key areas and inadequacies in meeting agency requirements. One Member pointed out that the reference to independent evaluation staff needs changing. It is difficult to see how agency staff, working within a wider career structure, can be genuinely independent and able to cover a wide enough range of topics and countries (The reference here to expertise should refer to consultants only).

Some of the programme areas in which Members indicate to have had shortages include: emergency aid, governance, environment, health, social and cultural programmes and processes,

human rights, institution building, NGO projects, technical assistance, programme lending, and country programming.

Programme areas where they consider that they have been best staffed include: economic and social infrastructure and policy, economic growth, public administration, rural development, agriculture, democracy, environment sectoral expertise, engineering, and NGO support. The variation among Members' strengths and weaknesses is, however, considerable. Members also point out that evaluation units are often staffed with generalists, not technical specialists who are experienced in development issues, have post-graduate degrees with research skills and first-hand developing country experience. In some cases in the beginning, they may not have had training or experience in evaluation work.

Resources for evaluations

To be able to guarantee the "critical mass" of available expertise for evaluations, it is important to have both the appropriate number of professional staff (excluding consultants and administrative support) and budget allocations. The questionnaire investigated on whether the number of employees was adequate for the work required and if the evaluation budget was consistent with the demand of the agency.

Responses indicated that bilateral agencies generally employ from 1 to 14 professional evaluators, with a majority of Members (9) which contract from a minimum of 3 to a maximum 6 experts on a permanent basis. Some Members reported plans to increase the number of employees, and to upgrade expertise, to improve their ability to manage their workloads.

Most Members suggest that evaluation offices are having problems managing their workloads. Five indicate that they have been somewhat short, and three report that staffing has been totally inadequate. Only four Members consider that the number of professional staff has been about right for handling the volume of work that the office was required to carry out.

The share of agencies' annual budgets allocated to central evaluation office ranges from 0.02 per cent to 2.8 per cent. Multilateral agencies tend to have the largest share, with 1 to 3 per cent of the total. On average, bilateral agencies' evaluation budgets reach 2 per cent of the total, if decentralised budgets are included, 1 per cent otherwise. In general, project evaluations are financed directly from project budgets.

Reporting successes and failures

The Principles state that "credibility requires that evaluations should report successes as well as failures". Members indicate that successes and failures have been included in evaluation reports "consistently without exception" (9 Members), or "in most but not all reports" (9 Members). In other cases, failure and successes have been "rarely" included, or "only in some" reports.

Members (12) are generally not in the position to suggest whether it is more effective to learn from successes than from failures. Among those who have a view, four Members indicate that they are more likely to learn from failures, while six suggest that there are not significant differences.

Supporting documentation

Credibility, of course, depends on the adequacy of documentation and analytical background which support findings and lessons. Most Members have experienced some difficulties in providing documentation and data -- a continuing problem for some (7), whilst not very significant for others (7). These difficulties are mostly related to time constraints and lack of key data, e.g. information on cause and effect relationships. Some of the Specific difficulties relate to:

- data problems when development policy impacts have been inadequately monitored;
- cost considerations: how much is reasonable to spend to ensure credible information and valid conclusions;
- the tendency of consultants to write descriptive rather than analytical reports;
- problems recruiting consultants with the appropriate range of skills to address a wide variety of developmental and technical issues;
- lack of firm support for findings in evaluations of democracy programmes; and
- problems at the level of project or programme objectives.

There is a recognition that, in many instances, detailed empirical evidence for findings may be illusive; certainly the type of evaluation makes a difference.

Resolving differences

It is common to experience disagreements on data, analysis, and conclusions. Most Members have put in place a mechanism to resolve these differences while maintaining the integrity of reports. Generally, either the team leader (as 12 Members reported), or evaluation managers (as 12 other Members reported), are responsible for finding a common understanding and a compromise even though, in some cases, the team leader and manager may be the same person. In the majority of cases, consensus is reached through discussions involving the parties concerned on how to preserve the integrity of the evaluation. Moreover, minority reports have been relatively rare but, where they have occurred, they may be included in the report. For some Members (5), disagreements rarely occur.

Transparency

The Principles stress that transparency is “crucial to its (evaluation’s) credibility and legitimacy” and, thus, the evaluation process should be as open as possible. Distinctions between findings and recommendations should be clear, as well as between openness in relation to agency managers, staff and legislation groups, and openness to the public and press.

For about half the Members (12), the evaluation process has been fully open to agency managers and staff from TORs to recommendations. For the others, this information has been available either to a wide audience after the reports have been revised by the governing body, or only to those managers directly responsible.

For a few Members (6) information for legislative groups has been available throughout the entire process. For others (8), only after the review of senior management or governing body. Public and press access throughout the process is rare (5), even after senior management or governing body reviews (5). The public and press have access to this information only if the report is published (this is the case for eight Members). Amongst Members, practices vary widely. These include:

- several evaluation seminars which have been held each year to share and discuss evaluation findings with the general public in addition to annual publications of evaluation reports, (JICA, Japan);
- information which has been widely shared within the agency and to anyone else who might ask for it (USAID, US);
- findings, lessons and recommendations which have been available to all staff through computer facilities (EBRD);
- all reports which have been published, with rare exceptions owing to extreme political or commercial sensitivity (UKODA, UK);
- reports which may be distributed upon request if senior management so decides (SDC, Norway);
- all reports which have been published, and working drafts and sub-studies which are usually not published, and may be consulted by the public (Netherlands);
- reports which have not been published, but a cross section analysis and synthesis have been published once a year (BMZ, Germany);
- primary evaluation products and process evaluations which are not disclosed. All other evaluations are disclosed. (World Bank/OED).

Compliance with the transparency Principle largely differs amongst countries with a range that goes from wide open to restrictive. An in-depth understanding of the reasons for these differences might be a subject for further examination.

Transparency is also facilitated if findings are distinguished from recommendations. Members have made these distinctions consistently (7), or in most reports (10). In a few instances, recommendations have been excluded in the reports themselves, but circulated separately with them. Sometimes, separate section exists for findings, but only for conclusions and recommendations.

Interestingly, while the Principles express concern about compromising sources, Members (16) have cited them in their reports, either consistently, or in part. The remaining Members cite sources only in some reports. One comment (New Zealand) seems to convey the view of many Members: in all reports there is a list of people visited and/or interviewed. Tables and charts would always be sourced. Reports would not normally footnote sources for all comments since the aim is to produce a readable report, not an academic thesis.

Recipient country participation and credibility

The full participation of recipient countries in evaluation, as set forth in the Principles, is important for establishing credibility and commitment. Although recipient participation in evaluation will be discussed more extensively in section 6, it is interesting here to analyse whether or not it enhances credibility.

About half the Members (11) found that recipient participation has increased credibility in the eyes of their (donor) managers, while others (8) have found this to be true also for recipient country managers. Many have no information. However, Members' comments point to the desirability of recipient participation to increase the credibility of their reports.

The desirability of recipient countries' participation in evaluation is often indicated by Members:

- the credibility was increased when views and data (social, cultural and economic knowledge), which reflect local conditions, were incorporated into the evaluation process (JICA, Japan);
- its [participation] may enhance the credibility of the findings for recipient institutions; (Netherlands);
- insiders rather than outsiders are often more credible as long as the right people are involved. Involvement means more chance of ownership of findings, conclusions and recommendations (New Zealand);
- credibility is not affected by the nationality of participants but by their competence and skill (SIDA, Sweden);
- [participation] gives a greater sense of ownership and stakeholding (UKODA, UK);
- the involvement of informed managers and operating staff in evaluations studies is valuable despite the danger of some loss of independence (CIDA, Canada).

Although, Member countries recognised the importance of having recipient country participation, they are concerned with its practical implementation. Many of them stated that : participation has not been usual and has been difficult to achieve in practice; host country officials rarely participate in a meaningful way, or such participation may have worked negatively on matters of objectivity. Finland pointed out that the effects on credibility of recipient country participation is difficult to verify as the culture, education and commitment of local evaluators vary.

Usefulness

Principle 5: "To have an impact on decision-making, evaluation findings must be perceived as relevant and useful and be presented in a clear and concise way. They should fully reflect the different interests and needs many parties involved in development co-operation." (21)

To achieve relevance and usefulness, evaluations must: improve communications and learning; provide a basis for follow-up; be timely and accessible.

Benefits of the evaluation process

According to the Principles, evaluation should aim to (i) promote further clarification of objectives; (ii) improve communications; (iii) increase learning; and (iv) lay the groundwork for follow-up action. About half the Members (10) consider that they have been highly successful in achieving these goals; others (10) consider that they have been successful only in a few instances for all four categories.

While rating each of these categories separately is difficult, somewhat subjective, and varied among Members, the few who did rate them suggest that the pattern has been mixed, with the “clarification of goals” either highly successful for some, or very weak for others. The aim of “improving communications” has tended to be less successful. “Increase learning” and “groundwork for follow-up action” have generally been successful.

Only two Members have consistently undertaken action on evaluation recommendations, while half of them did “more than half of the time”. However, in few cases, either little action was undertaken to follow the recommendations, mainly because there were disagreements with the conclusions, or little was known about what had happened to the recommendations. In any case, it is pointed out that, even when action has been undertaken, implementation has taken a long-time.

In cases where action has been taken, it has concerned new or revised policy statements, revised operations manuals, or calls for project/programme revisions. JICA described that action undertaken on the basis of *ex-post* evaluation recommendation allowed a better choice of experts and equipment and improved projects and programme sustainability.

Timeliness

For many Members (14), evaluations have been timely without exception, or timely for most reports; only a few (3) indicate that the reports have rarely been timely. The most common reasons for delays in making reports available relate to: under-estimation of the scope of the task and the time required to complete it (most common), problems with data and logistical arrangements (common), delays in the selection of team members or conflicts among them (rare), delays in management reviews and internal decision-making (in a few instances). Getting the final synthesis completed and carrying out discussions with stakeholders (or recipient partners) have been time consuming. However, it was recognised that performance on evaluations has improved over the period considered by this questionnaire

Some Members (7) note that decision-makers were, at times, determined to proceed without considering evaluation findings and recommendations, even if the evaluation process was on schedule. Most central offices produce *ex post* evaluation which by nature may be released too late to affect the activity (UKODA), raising a question of relevance. However, as noted above, in some instances, these *ex post* evaluations have been used to maintain the effect and sustainability of completed projects and draw lessons for new projects. CIDA notes that “evaluation always takes more time than one would like, especially when a large effort is undertaken, i.e. the six reviews that CIDA has planned for the six operational priorities set by Parliament. Improving the speed and timeliness of evaluations is very important to the evaluation office this year”.

Ease of access

Distribution of these reports is critical to ease access. Members have developed practices which include: publishing reports as written (11), or after revising sensitive material (political, diplomatic and commercial) (3), providing executive summaries (7), distributing abstracts (12), using electronic text databases including plans for a home page on the Internet (13), preparing digests of evaluations and cross-sector analyses for publications (7), and providing reference and research information services (3). Some Members have used other instruments to circulate information which include: publishing reports only to those directly involved; writing short annual reports and notes in annual budgets; providing information in press bulletins and at press conferences; including the DAC-CIDA database and library collections.

USAID reports that it has held a one-week summer session at which the latest evaluation documents and information on performance measurements were presented, and to which as many as 150 staff members attended. Others indicate that, largely within their agencies, they have been more constrained in distributing information on evaluations. Similarly, project evaluations such as mid-term evaluations and completion reports have not been widely distributed beyond those directly concerned, primarily because of limited relevance to a wider audience.

Easy access to material on lessons learned is particularly desirable. Members have provided such information in all (8), or almost all (7), of their reports, summaries and abstracts. But a few (3) have not provided lessons learned or separated them from conclusions.

Usefulness of evaluations during the project execution stage

The Principle on “usefulness” also emphasises that “evaluation has an important role to play at various stages during the execution of a project or programme and should not be conducted only as an *ex post* exercise”. This point applies mostly to decentralised evaluations and most Members point out that they have limited responsibility for ongoing and mid-term project evaluations. (This topic is covered later in section 11.) They do, however, stress that independent evaluations as complements to monitoring systems have been provided in only selected project and programme plans (15), or covered by plans and funding separate from the projects (5).

General comments on the usefulness Principle

USAID observes that Principle 5 is “overstated as it is impossible for one evaluation study to be all things to all users. We find it necessary to limit the scope of most of our assessments very tightly with a short list of straightforward questions. USAID’s system is in flux with the emphasis on the programme and strategic objectives rather than projects and a heavy emphasis on performance measurement systems”. CIDA suggested including in the Principle the notion of accurateness by adding the word “accurate”, i.e. “relevant, useful and accurate”. New Zealand points out that the language is “jargon” such as “independent evaluation staff, plan of operation”, and suggests “Evaluation involving independent evaluators and key stakeholders during implementation is an important complement to regular monitoring.”

Italy suggested that, in the past, evaluation activities have been mainly concerned with periodic monitoring of the progress of ongoing projects. More recently, the trend has reversed in favour of half-time (mid-term evaluation), or evaluations made during the course of work. Periodic monitoring, in fact, consists of parallel management control, forecasting activities, and have an operational character. Continuing throughout the life of the project, this monitoring entails higher

costs for the administration and disagreements on recommendations with operational divisions. Mid-term evaluations can bring about useful lessons for future initiatives but also considerable modification to the course of projects, eventually revising the specific objectives expected and the use of resources with appreciable benefits in resource management.

AsDB describes his agency's procedures to ensure that evaluation funding is used. In brief, the central evaluation office is responsible for dissemination, while application is left to the operations departments. To encourage application, a number of practices have been established: management instructions requiring findings to be taken into account in country operational strategies and programmes, evaluation office commentary on operational documents, high-level management committee (president, vice-presidents and senior staff) on evaluation findings, and audit committee monitoring of post evaluation processes.

Participation of donors and recipients

Principle 6: "Consistent with the partnership Principle stressed above, whenever possible, both donors and recipients should be involved in the evaluation process." (23)

Although it is not expressed explicitly, the participation of recipient countries encompasses local officials, professional organisations, and affected groups. It asserts that participation in evaluations will strengthen recipient capacities for evaluation work.

Participation of recipient country officials

Eleven Members report that participation by officials has been the practice in most, if not all, evaluations or it has been at least frequent. Others indicate that such participation has been rare (5) or has not occurred (5). When there was participation, it has occurred, for the most part, in conjunction with field work, report preparation and revisions or, subsequently, in the use and dissemination of the reports. Reference is made to some participation in the definition of the TORs and in the choice of local evaluators. A few Members have been more consistent and persistent in meeting this requirement than others (e.g. for Finland, it is not a problem).

Among the reasons given for not having included, or having minimised, the participation of recipient country officials in evaluations are: time constraints, lack of local capacities, no interest in participating, increased complexities and delays, high costs, a different bureaucratic and analytical framework, political obstacles on both sides, difficulties in communication, and limited added value and objectivity. However, Members indicate that they consider it an obligation to include these officials whenever possible.

The use of recipient country professional organisations or national consultants in evaluations follows approximately the pattern for officials. A few members have used local organisations or local consultants consistently or for some reports; some frequently, and others only rarely or not at all.

The third group associated with participation is the one affected, including the beneficiaries, by the project activity. It has rarely been included although, for certain types of evaluations, its views have been sought during evaluation field work. It rarely has an opportunity to comment on a draft report. The types of projects where, to some extent, the affected groups have been involved in evaluations include: impact evaluations, community-based projects, professional training, rural

development, co-operative water supply, health, microfinance, education, and special groups such as women. The Netherlands refers to participatory perception studies which involve local groups.

The Principles emphasise the importance of participation as a learning process for recipient countries along with other training and institutional development support (this latter aspect was not covered in the questionnaire). Members indicate that this approach to building local evaluation capacities has been minimally effective (10), while some (6) consider it has been very effective.

Members' efforts to provide for participation with the objective of building local capacity have varied between "generally" to "only in a few instances". It appears that this involvement has improved the quality and usefulness of reports in some instances, but only minimally in others, with perhaps more emphasis on usefulness than on quality. However, UNDP notes the importance of participation to introduce the socio-cultural dimensions of project experience in evaluations.

There is little known about recipient country evaluations in which the donor participates, although five Members refer to such an experience.

General observations on the Principle of donor/recipient participation

UKODA considers this Principle important and well-known, but it requires a more rigorous approach in common with project formulation procedures. New Zealand added that there is the need to avoid words like "impartiality and independence", which are hard to achieve when local officials who are involved are not independent from project management. Lack of local impartiality needs to be addressed in the methodology, as remoteness (independence) may lead to irrelevance. USAID considers the Principle on participation as a nice rhetoric statement. According to them, it is not particularly relevant for a central evaluation office which is involved in multi-country evaluations from headquarters and which covers many projects or non-project assistance completed years before. CIDA suggests dropping the phrase "whenever possible" and points out that the Principle on participation is always possible, even if difficult.

Donor co-operation

Principle 7: "Collaboration between donors is essential in order to learn from each other and to avoid duplication of effort." (26)

By complying with this Principle, Members learn from each other, avoid duplication, develop evaluation methods, share reports and information and improve access to evaluation findings. Also, joint donor evaluations improve the understanding of each others' procedures and approaches and reduce administrative burdens on the recipient. Exchange of evaluation plans is encouraged.

Experience with donor co-operation

The questionnaire asked to rate different mechanisms used to share methods, reports, and findings. The rating resulting from responses to the questionnaire, while not to be considered prescriptive, shows the pattern of preference expressed by Members on the effectiveness of various methods used to enhance collaboration. DAC Evaluation Group meetings and joint evaluations were considered to be the most effective among possible mechanisms. Lower ratings are given for: bilateral meetings of evaluation offices, document exchanges, in-recipient country donor co-ordination meetings, electronic access to each other's evaluation databases, and international

conferences. Some Members, however, have not had experience with certain of the options and did not rate them. In general, direct contact in meetings ranks higher on effectiveness.

Those Members (16), who have participated in joint evaluations, found them highly -- or, more often occasionally -- satisfactory. However, several Members point out that they have had little experience with joint evaluations, particularly among bilateral donors.

Joint evaluations have proven to be satisfactory as they allow first-hand learning from each other, give greater results, facilitate feedback, mobilise knowledge, improve follow-up and save resources. On the other hand, they lead to higher costs since they require more time and resources to assure co-ordination and foster mutual understanding. Hidden agendas, different approaches, too general and diplomatic conclusions as they have to combine different interests, increased complexity and delays and different political objectives also work against effective joint evaluations.

Recipient reactions to joint donor evaluations

Little is known about recipient countries' response to joint evaluations. Those who do have some knowledge of the recipient country's reaction, reported that they respond differently to joint evaluations, according to the level of involvement required. Three Members found that recipient countries had reluctantly accepted to participate in joint evaluations.

Generally speaking, recipient countries are not informed about the possibility of saving on administrative burdens by implementing joint evaluations.

Improving joint evaluations

Member countries (e.g. Canada, the Netherlands and Norway) firmly suggested that to make joint evaluations more effective, it is needed to have: a practical and specific purpose; one donor to take the lead; not too many participants; one budget; one contract; and recipient participation.

New Zealand points out that to be successful, joint evaluations require ample time to be properly prepared and ensure a clear understanding of purpose and roles, complementary skills in team members, and responsibilities and expected outcomes. However, high costs in time and resources for joint efforts have been an important deterrent when compared to benefits. USAID concludes that the purpose of this Principle is not often realised. In general, it is hard to organise sufficient time for joint evaluations, let alone work through the challenges of drafting the TOR, clearance and publication procedures, and other aspects of the evaluation process. The EC points out that Principle 7 on donor co-operation avoids the key issue of comparison among countries as an important element of evaluation. This must be dealt within a clear statement in favour of joint and objective evaluations of the programmes of two or more donor agencies. In this respect, the use of joint teams of evaluators can be a useful mechanism.

Sharing evaluations plans

Members have mixed views on the merits of sharing evaluation plans. Some (9) consider them highly desirable; others (6) find them useful only rarely, or not always possible (Netherlands, UNDP for project evaluations). Again, theory appears to be better than practice as donors have their own agendas for evaluations, which are usually agency-specific in scope and purpose, and frequently

changing with shifting schedules and arrangements. According to UKODA, the DAC Evaluation Group is an excellent forum for this purpose. According to SIDA, groups of closely associated donor countries have found it beneficial to share evaluation plans and other information on evaluations.

Evaluation programming

Principle 8: “An overall plan must be developed by the agency for the evaluation of development assistance.” (27)

The Principles, in relation to evaluation programming, emphasise the importance of having plans with priorities that reflect the range of development assistance activities and types of evaluations that are most appropriate to meet the demands of senior management and policy-makers. Also guidelines and standards for evaluations should set minimum requirements.

Evaluation plans: time frames and coverage

Most Members (15) have made annual evaluation plans, while some employ multi-year cycles, e.g. of 2, 3 or 5-years, or have 2-3-year rolling plans; while others operate as the demand requires, or in some combination. Generally, these plans have established categories of evaluation and timetables while, at the same time, remaining flexible to accommodate changing circumstances. Also, the number of evaluations in these plans have usually been proportional to the agency's area of development assistance.

Some Members, however, point out areas that have not been well covered in these plans, such as: multilateral aid, in-house management, non-project assistance, emergency assistance, and country effectiveness studies. About half the Members (12) have included in their plans evaluations on a more comprehensive scale that permit an aggregation of results. While some other Members are concerned with the question of evaluation coverage, i.e. how many projects should reasonably be evaluated when not all can be included in an evaluation programme? The Principles do not address this point.

Preparing and approving evaluation plans

Who recommends and who determines what evaluations should be undertaken and included in the plans? For most Members, the evaluation offices and line operations staff and, in a few instances, senior management recommend those to be undertaken. Senior management approval of evaluation plans have been most common but, for some, line operations and evaluation offices themselves have determined evaluation plans. Some Members (World Bank, Netherlands, IDB, DANIDA, UNDP, Italy and others) comment that governing bodies, ministers, heads of agencies and recipient countries have had an important role in both recommending and approving evaluation plans, or portions of them.

Guidelines and standards for the evaluation process

Most members (18) have established guidelines and standards for evaluations which are being applied. However, their application has not been consistent for some (5). A few (3) are still working on the guidelines.

Observations on evaluation plans and guidelines

Some Members follow an established procedure for developing their evaluation plans. This consists in identifying all completed projects, soliciting the views of management and operations staff in areas of interest, applying selection criteria (potential lessons learned, sector distribution, etc.), holding discussions with a management committee or board and, subsequently, reviewing what is feasible during the year. UKODA stressed that while, in the past, evaluation plans have covered the whole range of agency activities over a period of 5-7 years, the approach is being modified to more closely relate evaluations to the agency's principal aims. USAID are reticent about multi-year evaluation plans; its evaluation office has come to see long-term plans as a strategy for producing studies that are irrelevant and of little interest to management.

SDC recommends developing an appropriate link between external evaluations and internal self-evaluations of projects to facilitate the inclusion of lessons learned in the process. SIDA, in a recent reorganisation, has established responsibilities for its central evaluation office to perform comprehensive and strategically important evaluations, and ensure that a good balance is upheld between the selection of areas and subjects for evaluation according to agency objectives and sector, geographic, forms of aid coverage.

Design and implementation of evaluations

Principle 9: "Each evaluation must be planned and terms of reference (TORs) drawn up in order to: define the purpose and scope of the evaluation; describe the methods to be used; identify the standards; determine the resources and time required." (32)

These Principles are concerned with the main components of evaluations: TORs, structure and coverage, methodologies, performance monitoring and ratings.

Terms of Reference

The terms of reference employed by Members during the period covered by this questionnaire have met the requirements: 4 Members consistently, and 13 generally. Purpose and scope, definition of activity, and the questions and issues to be addressed are the best and strongest sections of the TORs. On the other hand, standards against which performance is assessed and the methods to be used are the weakest sections of the TORs. It is pointed out that the DAC standards on TORs are being used and will lead to a more consistent approach.

Coverage of basic issues and topics in evaluations

On the components of evaluation coverage, experience suggests that analyses of “objectives achieved” and “rationale” have been somewhat better prepared than those for “impacts and effects.” On the coverage in sections of evaluations reports, assessment, conclusions and recommendations on “overall results”, “sustainability”, “alternatives”, “lessons learned”, and the presentations of “overall results” have received better coverage than the others. Citations of alternatives have received the weakest coverage. Coverage of “sustainability” and “lessons learned” appeared satisfactory but are not highly rated. However, the differences among the ratings of these topics are minimal.

Evaluation methods, techniques, and indicators

The Principles and, thus, the questionnaire have not elaborated to any extent on methodology. Generally, the methods and techniques used have varied substantially depending on the type of evaluation and, for the most part, have been qualitative or a mix of qualitative and quantitative. Desk studies with site verifications have been a standard practice among Members. Other methods have included interviews with key persons, periodic data gathering for trends, participatory stakeholder-conducted evaluations, perception studies among recipients, and reference group discussions.

The experience with performance monitoring indicators that specify outputs, outcomes, and anticipated results has been mixed. Some Members (8) indicate an increased use of these indicators. Others (7) suggest that the use of indicators is not uniform in projects, e.g. most Members answered that they have used these indicators “seldom”, “not in the past”, “rarely”, “partly”, “experimenting with.”

Eleven Members have said that they used indicators along with project logframes, but not necessarily with success. Several (6) do not use logframes. BMZ states that although target oriented project planning and impact monitoring are not always established, they are essential for efficient project management. Attempts to establish causal relationships have been tried by many, but with difficulty and doubts.

Success rating systems

Only seven Members report that they employ “success rating systems”, while the others do not use them, or only in specific situations. Among these latter, some intend to establish this kind of rating system. In general, this system consists of either a three, four or five point scale, which ranges from successful to unsuccessful, and specifies aspects required for rating performance. The use of success rating systems is not covered in the Principles statement.

Special programme interests

While the Principles do not address the coverage of special programme interests in evaluations, it was questioned whether or not to include these issues. Do individual evaluations need to include sections assessing special programme interests such as environment, gender, poverty, etc.? Half the Members (12) replied yes; for others, the practice was mixed depending on the project, or interests are covered only in special evaluations.

General observations

Comments from a few Members indicate general satisfaction with the design and implementation Principle: “rigorously and advantageously followed” (UKODA); and “the three basic issues are the core of evaluation points employed by the Foreign Ministry” (JICA). Some refer to special features that they are concerned with. For example, “use of rolling evaluation design for democracy project evaluations” (USAID); “a focus on sustainability as a frame for a concern for effectiveness and impact” (SDC); and “extremely important that lessons learned are effectively fed back to operational staff” (EBRD).

Reporting, dissemination and feedback

Principle 10: “Dissemination and feedback must form a continuous and dynamic part of the evaluation process.” (43). This Principle covers clarity and coverage of evaluation reports, their dissemination, and feedback mechanisms.

Report clarity and coverage

The use of technical language in reports did not bring comprehension problems, and where necessary technical language has been adequately defined. One Member, however, points out that bureaucratic writing is not unusual and needs to be addressed with proper editing.

Evaluation reports usually include a section for executive summaries, activity profiles, main findings, and conclusions and recommendations. Descriptions of methods and lessons learned have been less frequent.

Some evaluation offices produce reports which are slightly different and include: a separate and distinct section for recommendations, a statement which indicates follow-up action, an abstract, and a special section combining lessons and findings. Bibliographies, compositions of teams, TORs, itineraries and people encountered, and technical details were covered as appendices, if provided. Also, a separate volume with team member reports on country visits or other topics have served as a useful reference.

Dissemination

Members’ practices on dissemination of evaluation reports (complete document) with findings, lessons and recommendations follow a common pattern: senior management and boards (always); agency staff (almost always); legislators, public, including universities and research institutes, the press and other donors (sometimes); recipient countries (almost always); and, of course as pointed out, always to the staff responsible for the projects or programmes which are evaluated. However, Member policies on report dissemination vary from quite restrictive to without restrictions. In the latter case, dissemination to those outside the agency is simply a matter of making a request. The dissemination of syntheses and summaries follow approximately the same pattern as for the reports, although few Members send them to recipients, largely because they are not country-specific.

The dissemination of abstracts, for those who prepare them, is concentrated on management and staff, but they are also sent to selected legislators and interested public and other donors. One Member mentioned that the Internet would be useful for this purpose. Thirteen Members prepare annual reports on findings, conclusions and recommendations and, in one instance, the state of the evaluation system. For decentralised evaluation systems, which mainly concentrate on project evaluations, dissemination arrangements are not addressed.

Eleven Members indicate that senior management has either been enthusiastic, or somewhat enthusiastic in their support for evaluation dissemination activities. Others (5) indicate minimal interest. Few Members (4) have a separate budget for dissemination work, no budget (5), or have resources for dissemination included in evaluation staff responsibilities and in budgets for each evaluation separately. One Member noted that dissemination has not been the strongest feature of the system but is under review.

Feedback

The most important feedback mechanism is the arrangement for integrating evaluations findings and recommendations into agency policies and programmes. The mechanisms used by Members vary. Many (12) require senior management responses. Most Members (17) conduct general staff workshops and seminars. Other common practices are: in-house electronic information systems (12), workshops with recipient country officials (12), requirements for inclusion of lessons of experience in new project planning (12), and reviews with other donors (10). Less common are: permanent evaluation committee reviews (6), *ad hoc* peer group reviews (8), and reference and research services (7). Required responses from recipients countries are practised by only a few (6). Other feedback techniques cited are: raining courses and a feedback control system for follow-up one year after the evaluation. The most useful mechanisms identified by Members are those that require senior management responses and provide for general staff workshops and, for some, meetings with interested recipient country representatives.

While the dissemination and feedback activities of Members generally comply with the Principles, there is presently no information on the relative effectiveness of the various methods. This issue will be addressed in the second phase of the review of the Principles by means of a users survey.

Decentralised evaluation systems

The statement of Principles does not specifically and separately address the question of decentralised evaluation, although it is partially covered under the Principle related to “usefulness.” Nevertheless, it is implicit that the Principles cover those evaluations carried out by offices and agencies other than the central evaluation offices. Some brief questions were brought up on this subject which Members may wish to address more fully in future.

Fifteen Members report that evaluations of development assistance projects and programmes are carried out by offices other the central evaluation office. USAID, for example, noted that the majority are carried out by overseas missions and other agency bureaux. There have been thousands of these evaluations, mostly project ones, since the Principles statement was adopted.

Central evaluation offices do not appear to play a significant role in preparing decentralised evaluations. In fact, only six Members provide guidelines and standards; others (6) have an oversight role in the preparation of annual evaluation programmes; while others (9) monitor their conduct. However, some Members (12) review these evaluations periodically for their quality and use.

Central evaluations offices are involved with decentralised evaluations by providing *ad hoc* advisory services when requested, participating in preparing guidelines, advising on TORs, choosing consultants, advising on methodology, training courses, and in-country capacity building. Other Members (SIDA, SDC, Netherlands, UKODA, AusAID, IDB and others) prefer to provide assistance to line departments with advisory services on quality assessments of TORs and evaluation reports and on choice of evaluation activities, the design and dissemination of guidelines for evaluation, including documentation and reporting. New Zealand participates in decentralised evaluations by jointly preparing TORs, selecting consultants, reviewing draft reports, debriefing consultants, and sometimes by being part of the evaluation team.

Finally, France and UNDP raised the question as to whether the Principle should consider, and appropriately address, the topic of coverage. In brief, guidance would be helpful on the number and range of projects that should be evaluated in a decentralised evaluation programme.

What are Members' views on the quality of decentralised evaluations? Most Members (15) consider that the quality of these evaluations is mixed; three Members said that they were well prepared and meet high standards; while nine indicated that the evaluations have been well used in decision-making.

These evaluations largely address operational issues and, thus, are not useful on matters of effects, sustainability, and policy concerns. Also, they lack objectivity and impartiality, and have been too descriptive, avoiding analysis of critical issues. The Netherlands Development Co-operation has just published an interesting study of project monitoring and evaluation which concludes that:

"The main findings of this study point to deficiencies in evaluation and monitoring which limit the effectiveness of these two instruments. That these deficiencies are not unique to the DGIS is made clear by studies commissioned by other donors (see for example CIDA, 1991, Scanteam, 1993, Finnida, 1991, USAID, 1992).

Application of these Principles and follow-up

In the concluding section of the Principles, DAC Members agreed to three follow-up actions. They are to:

- review their evaluation policies and procedures against the above Principles, and to adjust them where necessary;
- review evaluation policies and procedures as part of the DAC aid reviews and other relevant work;
- draw the Principles to the attention of their developing country partners as a code of good evaluation practice to be followed whenever possible." (44)

Agency statements of policies and procedures on evaluation

Reviews of agency policies against the Principles has occurred entirely or partially in thirteen Member agencies. For these Members, agency management or boards have approved a policy statement; others have not, or are in the process of preparing one. A number of these Member policy statements are new, dating from 1991 when the Principles were first adopted by the DAC, to 1996. Adjustments in agency policies to conform with the Principles have occurred, fully or partially, in twelve agencies. While less clear and harder to assess, the main adjustments in policies and procedures relate to: donor co-operation, usefulness, design and implementation of evaluations, and reporting and dissemination. All areas of the Principles have been drawn on by at least two Members.

Discussion of the Principles with staff and others

Seven Members indicate that they have used the Principles effectively in discussions with staff and management; others have not used them, or to little effect. While some Members note that the Principles have been used to develop their own policies and procedures, others observe that their agency evaluation policies and procedures have largely been in conformity with the Principles. Twelve Members reported that their evaluation policies and procedures have been included in DAC country aid reviews. Few Members have discussed the Principles with recipient countries. Some Members comments follow:

- France/FRMC: “On the whole the Principles of the DAC are taken in account, save for the participation of the authorities of the recipient countries.”
- Germany/BMZ: “The German evaluation policy and procedures were already to a large extent in conformity with the Principles of the DAC.”
- Japan/JICA: “The DAC Principles have been used for the effort of the Foreign Ministry to elaborate and improve its evaluation policies and procedures.”
- Canada/CIDA: they “have been used by the Auditor General in reviewing CIDA’s approach to evaluation”.
- IDB: “The DAC Principles are the base on which we redesigned the Bank Evaluation System.”

Appendix 2.

PHASE II: RESULTS FROM THE SURVEY

Introduction

The second phase of the review focuses on the views of users of evaluations that have been produced by central evaluation offices. In some cases, the views of recipient countries and observations on decentralised evaluations were included. This report provides the synthesis of the surveys of users of evaluations which took place at the end of 1996, with the exception of those surveys that a few Members had undertaken earlier.

At the 15 October 1997 Meeting of the Working Group on Aid Evaluation, Members had an opportunity to establish a common understanding of the purpose and approach for this second phase. As a result of this discussion, it was concluded that the approach to the survey should be modified to accommodate Members' varying circumstances, and three options were presented for their consideration and adoption. The description of these is provided in the survey guide (See Appendix 4).

As the DAC has placed high priority on "effective partnerships" in its strategy for development co-operation in the 21st century. Members of the Evaluation Group were urged to use this survey to assess the views of recipient countries. Members agree that the survey provides an important dimension to their work as has been evident in the many regional conferences on evaluation. The survey guide, therefore, included a questionnaire to be used with recipient country officials.

Overall scope of the survey of users of evaluation

The survey of users of evaluations aimed to gain a better understanding of the impact, usefulness and relevance of the evaluations prepared by central evaluation offices from the users' perspective. How well have central evaluation offices complied with the Principles? In line with the survey guide, Members' individual assessments have provided the basis for a synthesis of their experience with the Principles as viewed by the users of evaluations

The Principles point to nine areas of performance criteria for Members' evaluation activity: the purpose of evaluation; impartiality and independence; credibility; usefulness; participation of donors and recipients; donor co-operation; evaluation programming; evaluation design and implementation; reporting and dissemination and feedback. Of these areas, the survey of users of evaluations, including recipient country users, focused on:

- users' knowledge of the evaluation work of central evaluation offices;
- their participation in evaluation processes;
- the quality of evaluation products including questions of impartiality and credibility;
- the relevance and usefulness to them of the products of evaluation;
- the impact of evaluations and their recommendations and lessons on improving the quality of agency programmes;
- users' views on the current and potential involvement of partner country representatives as participants and users of agency evaluations, and the likely effects on the overall value of the evaluations; and
- an assessment of users' awareness of the Principles and performance of central evaluation offices on matters of independence and impartiality, organisational relationships and capacities, cost-effectiveness, and adequacy of agencies' attention to evaluation.

Categories of interviewees

The main categories of users of evaluations who have been interviewed by Member surveys include:

- agency senior management: separate and individual interviews with managers;
- agency operations staff such as desk officers and project managers (individual and focus group interviews);
- agency technical staff (individual and focus group interviews);
- selected individuals in legislatures, boards of directors, the media or other key officers who have received evaluation reports and may have used them in their consideration of the agency's development assistance programmes (separate interviews with each individual);
- selected representatives of implementing organisations such as other government implementing agencies, NGOs, and contractors (individual or focus group interviews);
- some representatives from organisations responsible for implementing development policies, e.g. other governmental agency implementing projects, NGOs, and contractors who are familiar with Member evaluations.

Twelve Members reported on interviews with their agency's senior management and fifteen with operating and technical staff (including two with evaluation staff only); seven interviewed individuals in external organisations such as parliaments, political leaders, other aid agencies, NGOs, the media, and consulting firms. Eleven Members reported on the views of their overseas mission staff, some of these reports included the mission staff's observations on the views of recipient

officials and, in a few cases, the results of direct interviews with them. Ten Members employed outside consultants to undertake the surveys; the other surveys were carried out by agency staff and in-house workshops.

Given the competing demands on Members' time, one can only be impressed by the responsiveness of the group. It is hoped that as well as providing value to the work of the DAC, the survey of users' reports has also been instructive in guiding improvements in agencies' evaluation work.

Synthesis coverage

This synthesis report covers nine topics of the survey guide. It aims to extract from Members' reports the key patterns of views of the users of evaluations, noting any exceptions that prove to be instructive.

The synthesis process is complicated by two main features of the interviews and evaluation programmes. First, the positions of the users, as requested by the survey guide, include a wide spectrum of officials: mid-level management, operating and technical staff, senior management and heads of agencies, and groups external to the agency who have varying interests in evaluations of development programmes. Second, the subjects of the evaluations range from traditional project evaluations to those that cover sectors, cross-cutting programmes, and development themes.

Users' involvement and interest varies accordingly: generally, the broader topics are of interest to higher levels of management and external groups; project evaluations are concerns of operating and technical staff. The synthesis attempts to make distinctions between these groups of users and evaluation topics. At various points in the synthesis, a Member (by country) is referred to in parentheses to identify the source of the comment or quote. This association serves only to illustrate a point and should not be taken as characterising the whole evaluation operation or as a conclusion of this report. Also, the synthesis does not attempt to identify all Members for whom a particular point may be relevant.

Users' knowledge of the evaluation work of central evaluation offices

Generally, those interviewed were familiar (or more or less so) with the work and products of central evaluation units -- more the products than annual evaluation plans. However, there are many gradations of knowledge depending on position, responsibility, length of service, and workload. Key points on knowledge of central evaluation work include:

- annual summary reports, and periodic "letters" with short summaries, which have served to make the products of evaluations widely known, if not in depth (France, Japan, UK, World Bank);
- evaluations activities which are well-known by those with direct responsibility for the project or programme evaluated. In general, however, there is little knowledge of evaluations; even if relevant, direct ties to one's work is a key factor (all Members);

- reports which are not widely read in full, or in part, even at times when they apply to user's work (all Members);
- evaluation summaries which are more widely read, if not systematically; again relevance is important as even summaries are often just filed for future reference (most Members where summaries are provided);
- specially targeted and highly readable summaries or highlights which have been found to be well read by a large number of staff (USAID, World Bank), but there are still many who do not know about them, or do not read them;
- length of service, which is important, as those with more years of service are more knowledgeable about evaluation products than those with fewer, say, two years or less (AsDB, Japan). While it is understandable that new staff are less knowledgeable about the products of evaluations, they are the ones who could benefit most. Long-term staff know about evaluations. Their concerns relate to the use of the lessons contained in the evaluation reports. It seemed that reports have repeatedly suggested the same kind of lessons related to the need for improving aid performance. This is particularly the case among technical staff (Denmark and others).

A common view expressed by interviewees was that "their general working conditions are approaching the unreasonable". Understaffing is reflected in the staff member's work as a lack of time to do anything thoroughly. In this situation, evaluation products tend not to have top priority because they do not require immediate action, although staff acknowledge the importance of evaluation in their daily work and professional skills (Denmark, Finland, and others).

Senior managers are generally knowledgeable about their agency's evaluation programme, although some complained about the length of reports and lack of concise summaries. They do not particularly look out for evaluation information, neither do they make the linkage between evaluations and policy decision-making. They see evaluation's role as primarily providing transparency and accountability rather than a constructive contribution to management's work. They are not enthusiastic and supportive when the independence of the evaluation process is asserted.

For users in external agencies, knowledge of the evaluation process is limited and largely related to experience with a particularly interesting or controversial report about agency performance. Important exceptions are those Members who have been active and engaged in parliamentary committees overseeing development assistance programmes (Denmark, Finland, France, Netherlands), and those that provide periodic newsletters with brief notations on evaluation reports (France, and others).

USAID senior management reaction to evaluation products were overall favourable where the products were designed to fit the user's needs and interests. 80 to 95 per cent (depending on the product) of senior managers had seen and used the products of the evaluation office such as evaluation highlights, research and reference services, evaluation news, and the Annual Report of Programme Performance. For "Highlights", an eight-page summary of cross-cutting evaluations on themes of programmatic interest, USAID emphasised that "their readability, conciseness, the missing link between the manager and the findings, are an important vehicle for sharing information on what is working and what isn't".

Participation in evaluations

Participation in the evaluation process starts with the preparation and review of annual evaluation plans. Most Members have well-established procedures for these plans calling for senior management approval (Canada, Netherlands, UK). Participation in the choice of topics to be included in the plan is more variable. A common concern is that the process is not transparent and that operating staff's suggestions are not taken into account. On the other hand, senior management's suggestions are normally included. In general, however, the annual planning process is not an area of major concern among the users of evaluations (Denmark, European Commission, Norway, and others).

Apart from annual evaluation planning, the extent of participation in an agency's evaluation process is directly related to the relevance of one's work. Most interviewees responsible for specific projects or programmes have had an opportunity (although not always taken) to comment on terms of reference, but to a considerably lesser extent on choice of evaluators and other aspects of an evaluation's implementation. At the cross-cutting level (sector, country or thematic evaluations), for some Members, officials in policy roles participate in the early planning of the evaluations, but others have expressed concerns that they are not adequately consulted -- a point of tension related to the independence principle.

It is rare that operating or technical staff have the opportunity to participate in implementing evaluations as such participation is considered inappropriate for maintaining impartiality, and workloads do not facilitate it. Exceptions are those situations where the evaluation process is deliberately designed to involve operating staff in self-evaluation procedures (Switzerland).

It is more usual for users to participate in reviews of draft reports and the formulation of their conclusions and recommendations. This is standard practice in all evaluation operations. Those users commenting on this step in the evaluation process found it to be beneficial and instructive and, perhaps, the most important opportunity for them to learn from agency experience. However, the variation comes in the elaboration of the review process. For some, it is simply a matter of submitting comments on a draft report. For many Members, the review process calls for well-structured meetings with evaluators and pertinent agency staff specialists present. In some agencies, staff participate in senior management meetings to review conclusions and recommendations and determine follow-up actions.

Issues related to participation are further evident in discussions in the next sections on quality, relevance and usefulness, and impact.

The quality of evaluation products including questions of impartiality and credibility

Although none of the interviewees had read all the reports or, rarely, all of any one report, they were still able to conclude that their quality was satisfactory; some were excellent, others less so, but none were cited as unsatisfactory.

However, when the interviewers probed more in-depth, positive and negative views on the quality of evaluations become more evident. These views, of course, varied with the position occupied by the interviewee. The following are some of the users' appreciation of the quality of evaluation reports. Of course, these judgements should be considered as a checklist and not a comprehensive and complete evaluation of all reports.

Interviewees' positive comments on the reports suggested that they were:

- impartial;
- credible;
- balanced;
- clear and easy to understand;
- they contained a wealth of information and provided evidence to support their conclusions.

The main faults identified were that some reports were:

- repetitious;
- routine;
- too long;
- unclear, and so not particularly readable.

Other negative comments (which varied among Members) included:

- insufficiently action-oriented;
- findings too negative; however, others said reports not tough enough, or toned down their critical findings;
- approach sometimes too ambitious, too academic, too technical, or blurred purpose;
- tendency to rely on personal opinions, especially those of evaluatee, and lacked hard data;
- insufficient understanding of institutional, historical, or local content;
- poor structure, lacking summaries and synthesis necessary to focus attention on key findings;
- reports too late to permit remedial action.

The choice of evaluators strongly affects the quality of reports. Some Members noted that, with some exemptions, contract evaluators are usually highly qualified. However the European Commission and some other Members stated that sometimes they were inexperienced. The UK pointed out that it is not sufficient to be acknowledged to be a good evaluator. (UK)

France highlighted another important point on the quality and choice of evaluators: “the circle of consultants is very closed, limiting their regeneration. To avoid the impoverishment of ideas and judgements, it is necessary to change this situation by opening up to larger markets for consultants”. A similar concern was expressed by Denmark: “about the close and continuing relationships of evaluators and their clients in Danida. The incorporation of a range of differing views and experience to bring fresh perspectives is healthy in evaluation work. The participation in evaluations of those who are professionals in relevant disciplines but not otherwise associated with evaluations might be beneficial to the evaluation process.” The Netherlands noted that “concerning the involvement of independent consultants, IOB (the central evaluation unit) is advised to search more systematically outside the Netherlands.” Moreover, the Netherlands underlined that there is a need for balance between the recruitment of internal and external evaluators: the former are less independent but better informed on context and background, and the latter are more independent but, some suggest, less familiar with the context.

Quality can also be affected by the review process and by the audience. Denmark noted that in the review process evaluators may either be pressed to accommodate management's interests or situations where the reports are too "polite", or too qualified, thus blurring the message. Similarly, one high-level official at USAID noted that "recent reports are useful: brief succinct, to the point; more so than longer products; the extensive review process softens conclusions." France supported this idea by pointing out that the participation of the evaluatee in the steering committee may affect final reports, i.e. as "partisans of moderation". Reports addressed to high-level officials and parliamentary representatives also suffer from this tendency toward moderation.

The relevance and usefulness of the products of evaluation

As explained in the Netherlands report, the question of usefulness is complex when one takes into account the position of the user and where evaluation fits into several policy cycles. This report refers to the policy cycles of elections, Ministry policy and sector/thematic documents, budgets, country plans, and programmes and projects. In relation to these cycles, the significance of evaluations depends on the interest and needs of users, the timing of the reports, and external events that are largely unexpected but generate an interest in an evaluation. In one case, this latter was evident in the considerable public interest in an evaluation of the impact of assistance on poverty reduction, stimulated by a newspaper account (Denmark), which is not an uncommon experience for most evaluation offices. Thus, making evaluations useful calls for careful consideration of the audience and, in turn, the type of products and character of presentations of the conclusions and recommendations.

Understanding the purpose of evaluations is a key consideration throughout the evaluation process as it shapes the analysis and users' interpretations of the findings and recommendations and, thus, their views on usefulness. Questions about interviewees' understanding of the purpose(s) of evaluations, however, were not directly pursued in many of the interviews.

However, some reports referred to several purposes. Denmark, for instance, mentioned four purposes: "(i) accountability: what was the benefit from assistance and how efficiently were resources used; (ii) guidance: what specific action was recommended to improve project or programme operations; (iii) lessons: what are the lessons from experience that point to patterns of performance that are effective or ineffective; and (iv) public information and understanding of the nature of the task of assisting developing countries: a broader interest than just accountability". The AsDB report listed five purposes: (i) lessons; (ii) guide for making changes; (iii) determination of successes and failures; (iv) a form of audit and fault finding; and (v) assessing accountability.

Findings from the survey showed that "most respondents perceived evaluation as a means for providing lessons." The majority of interviewees stressed learning, although accountability, documenting results, and guiding policy-making processes were also important (Norway). The Swiss report indicated that the participants in their workshop tended toward evaluation as contributing to the learning process, in particular for the self-evaluations; external evaluations served the purpose of accountability. Because of their responsibilities to Parliament, managers were more interested in the accountability features of external evaluations. Participants to these workshops did not see these two categories as contradictory as both aspects of evaluations are needed and a balance of the two should be sought in every evaluation. These patterns are evident in many other reports, either directly or indirectly.

In annual plans, TORs and reports, the purpose of the evaluation needs to be clear to ensure relevance and usefulness. Several Members interviewed commented that this clarity is not always present, which affects judgements of usefulness.

As is evident from the surveys, users of evaluations have differing interests on how they can assist them in their work:

- operating staff are primarily interested in how an evaluation can guide them in project or programme design or redesign;
- policy staff are interested in the cross-cutting, thematic and sector evaluations as guides for policy making;
- senior management is interested in information on results and accountability;
- external groups are also interested in achievements and broad questions on the impact of development assistance programmes with legislative committees concerned with accountability.

All groups are, at varying degrees, interested in lessons learned where these are well articulated, pertinent, and provide fresh insights into the development process.

This leads to the point about relevance. In a number of reports, interviewees raised this issue, which is a familiar concern. Individual project evaluations are rarely criticised for their relevance where they respond to current programming decisions. Long-term evaluations such as impact evaluations, project completion reports and their audits, and some programme studies, are more frequently challenged for their relevance as they are less timely and not linked to current agendas. While they may serve to answer “how have we been doing”, the data used are old and, thus, the conclusions historical.

In the present context of development assistance programming, the interests of development agencies is shifting markedly. Evaluations of older programmes either do not appear to be relevant or are not adequately linked to current interests. Interviewees suggest that there is a need “to concentrate on producing contemporary timely lessons that are relevant to current aid practice and emerging aid agendas. Aid is changing fast . We need to look where we are going not where we have been” (UK).

Other users of evaluations pointed that:

- evaluations are most useful when operating staff are involved; change of staff reduces ownership; (Canada)
- some new staff welcome having an evaluation report: “This is just what I need after transfer to a new position” (Netherlands). This interest may not be sustained as their work subsequently becomes subject to evaluation.

Apart from the questions of audiences, timeliness, and evaluations of old projects, there are a number of practical considerations that affect the usefulness of evaluations. Common refrains are:

- reports are too voluminous and not readable;
- summaries lack clarity;
- one product cannot serve different audiences -- the emphasis and editorial style needs to be adapted to the audience;
- access to pertinent information such as best practices or lessons learned is not easy, when needed as the costs of the search are too high.

Reports vary on the last point as some suggest that their evaluations reports and summaries are readily available and periodic notices keep staff informed about those completed (Canada, France, Norway, US,). However, ease of access is only the beginning in the process of using lessons learned.

A major point bearing on the usefulness of evaluations is the question of demand. Several reports noted that the use of products of evaluations is highly dependent on the interests of management. Has management signalled its wish to have these results and their lessons fed into the design of new projects, programmes and policies? Without this signal and appropriate follow-up, use of the evaluations is minimal in its impact on agency decision-making (AsDB, World Bank, France, Netherlands, and others).

The impact of evaluations and their recommendations and lessons on improving the quality of agency programmes

As Members have indicated, determining the impact of evaluations is difficult. Given the range of other influences on decision-making, identifying cause and effect relationships related to an evaluation's analysis, conclusions and recommendations require more in-depth assessment than has been possible in this survey. On this point, the following comments by two Members are interesting: It is "difficult to sort out learning from other sources" (Norway). Yet, as another view suggests, there is "more impact than it appears or is acknowledged, more learning than is realised or admitted to ..." (UK).

A number of the interviewees commented on what they believed to be the impact of evaluations:

- "Significant impact on agency performance and learning; accentuated when there is public reaction;" (Denmark)
- "Minor impact but variable according to the individual involved and responsible for policies;" (France)
- "Impact high at operational level with self-evaluation; less adequate at management level and on policy issues and cross-sector learning;" (Switzerland)
- "Impact generally recognised but only one-fourth [of those surveyed] indicated that recommendations are used in their work;" (Japan)

- “Mid-term and final evaluations have significant impact on project continuation or renewal; project level recommendations are acted on immediately; for other forms of evaluation there are doubts about their usefulness ...;” (European Commission)
- “The unit (evaluation office) has created enormously new possibilities and increased knowledge of the Department’s own strengths and weaknesses” (a view of one stakeholder); (Finland)
- “Evaluations are considered as having low impact on aid performance. The composition of the evaluation programme is seen as one of the main reasons for the limited relevance and impact of evaluations. Another factor is bad timing. Little pressure from senior management to learn from evaluations and satisfactory procedures are not in place for ensuring that findings, conclusions and recommendations from evaluations are followed up and integrated into aid policies, programmes and projects. Most interviewees feel that evaluations reports could, and should, be far more used and exploited for learning, information and communication purposes” (Norway).
- “higher profile and more effective approach to dissemination might serve to increase actual impact and perception of impact.” (UK)

A common conclusion of the surveys is that the impact at the project level is greater than at the programme and policy levels of an agency’s operations. This applies only to specific projects which have been evaluated with recommendations for future action. It does not apply to the use of lessons learned at the project level drawn from syntheses of project evaluations or other studies.

Operating staff tend not to be well informed about, or make use of, lessons learned based on comprehensive reviews of agency experience, although there is some suggestion that these lessons filter into staff understandings as new common knowledge from various sources.

Awareness and understanding of the DAC

Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance

Members report that there is little acquaintance with the DAC Principles for Evaluation. In only a few cases has the interviewee read the DAC Principles. This survey has, perhaps, made the Principles more widely known. More important, however, is how they are perceived in their own right, and how central evaluation offices conform to them.

The focus of the survey was on those Principles related to purpose, independence, impartiality, and credibility. While accepting their importance, differences in interpretation and application were apparent among Members. Views on the purpose of evaluations have been presented in section 5 above. The importance of independence and impartiality for the evaluation function was fully recognised and supported by interviewees. For example, the evaluation function is “now considered an indispensable service, capable of being trusted and evolving its practices towards autonomy, methods, impartiality and credibility” (France); or “The principle of independence and impartiality is crucial to IOB (evaluation office) credibility and legitimacy. Without exception, users agree on this point” (Netherlands).

At the same time, there was concern that an over-emphasis on independence compromised efforts at achieving acceptance and ownership of lessons.

- “Many claim that the principle of independence has traditionally been too rigidly adhered to at the cost of reduced relevance and learning.” (Norway)
- “Evaluation almost universally exists in a state of ‘qualified independence’. It cannot be otherwise if the function is to engage its stakeholders in evaluation and learning and be relevant to operations.” (Canada)
- “Almost all respondents found it crucially important to the aid programmes that evaluations were independent. However, several touched upon the question of how evaluation could be independent and at the same time be participatory particularly when the purpose was a learning process for the actors involved.” (Denmark)
- “Many users feel that the notion of independence should be qualified. They see IOB (the evaluation office) as ‘independent within but not independent from’ the Ministry.” (Netherlands)

This last observation highlights the difficult task of weaving ones way through the influences of political agendas in either avoiding politically-sensitive issues or addressing them directly. “Stakeholders may pursue different objectives: to eliminate an evaluation altogether (programming); to change the question into a more innocent one (terms of reference); to delete specific conclusions/recommendations or to soften the language with respect to critical findings (review and revision process) (Netherlands).

One recommendation related to the DAC Principles proposed that the “Principles need to be updated and refined to reflect current thinking and practice. In particular, they should reflect a stronger results orientation. A distinction needs to be made between “principles” and “process”, both of which now appear in the Principles. The process elements may be more usefully included in a set of operational guidelines to accompany the Principles” (Canada). This recommendation follows from a review with users of evaluations of each of the DAC Principles.

Apart from the above observations, other features of the DAC Principles were not directly addressed in the reports, although the discussions under other headings of this report highlight relevant views bearing on the Principles.

Assessment of experience with decentralised evaluation work

For the most part, central evaluation units are not involved in decentralised evaluations, which include mid-term evaluations, project completion reports and, occasionally, special studies. In some instances, central units may monitor these evaluations, provide technical advice on methods and TORs and prepare syntheses of groups of the decentralised evaluations. Although the DAC Principles do not directly address decentralised evaluations, many of the Principles are relevant and can also be applied to decentralised evaluations.

Despite the separation of decentralised evaluations from central evaluation units, project evaluations undertaken by operating units and implementing agencies represent a major volume of agency evaluation work and play an important and ongoing role in efforts to improve the quality of

development assistance programmes. One report pointed out that the “volume of decentralised evaluation work carried by advisory and geographic departments has increased enormously in recent years. More and more lessons learning is done within and by departments themselves”.

The spread of evaluation culture beyond EvD (central evaluation office) is a very positive development (UK). For one Member, considered self-evaluation system as a form of decentralised evaluations (Switzerland). Another Member reported on the review, recently undertaken as part of the reorganisation of aid in 1995 (Sweden), of the role and work in a recently established system of decentralised evaluations, of evaluation co-ordinators and programme officers responsible for evaluations.

It is a shared view that decentralised evaluations:

- “score high on relevance”; (Norway)
- are “probably more useful than those of the MFA whose evaluations are more general;” (Japan)
- the “project reviews by technical staff are more useful for operational purposes;” (Denmark)
- and “have an established position as an integral part of the life of a project; the utilisation of evaluations within individual projects is high”. (Finland)

The quality of decentralised evaluations is high, as was already shown in Phase I of the review of the Principles, while impartiality is a major concern. This has been pointed out in a study of project monitoring and evaluation by the Netherlands, which makes reference to similar studies by other Members. One report pointed out the differences between evaluation policy and actual practice with respect to: purpose, content coverage, objectivity and impartiality, involvement of partners, quality, and efficiency (Sweden).

Recipient country views

The information in those surveys that attempted to obtain the views of recipient countries as users of evaluations is limited. “It was also noted that 40-50 per cent of respondents from embassies indicate that they are not informed about recipient views” (Netherlands). “Except for persons who have been directly involved in (donor) evaluations, the knowledge of (donor) evaluations is limited. Even those involved had not seen the final evaluation reports” (Norway). A meaningful analysis of their views requires a specially designed approach that was not possible to include in this survey guide. Moreover, many Members were faced with time and resource constraints that prevented them from addressing this topic systematically. Yet the information provided is instructive and familiar to those working on evaluations with recipient countries. Some summary remarks which are representative of Members’ experience :

- Although case studies showed that the role of partner country representatives in evaluations has been increasing, “in practice, evaluation is still predominantly a donor-driven process. It is initiated by the donor, the Terms of Reference are mostly written [by the donor], the reports are finalised abroad, and the comments asked from the locals are not always taken into consideration. [Donor] officials and the project and or

programme implementers tend to be the most significant actors in determining which parts of the evaluators' recommendations will be implemented" (Finland).

- "Participation has besides involvement in the implementation of evaluations included comments on TORs and on draft reports. In a few cases findings from evaluations have also been used in briefing sessions or workshops with recipient country representatives. It was, however, also observed that donors make so many project evaluations that it was difficult for the host country to participate in all of them. It is observed that recipients would rather have their sectors and not projects evaluated" (Denmark).
- "Involvement of recipient countries in the evaluation process provides information and insights which otherwise would not be accessible; in practice, IOB [evaluation office] reports are used by a small group of interested professionals; otherwise rarely" (Netherlands).
- "The policy specifies that 'the partners in recipient countries should be engaged in the evaluation process; the evaluations should be undertaken in a spirit of co-operation.' Interviews revealed that partners were involved at the inception of the evaluation in somewhat less than 40 per cent of the cases, that they were only seldom engaged in the process, and that they received a draft report to comment on in only 50 per cent of the cases." (Sweden)

In general, those Members who commented recognised the importance of local participation in the evaluation process -- "experience shows that their involvement is beneficial" (France); "important and beneficial" (Norway); "those who joined in evaluations and who were asked to write reports appreciated the learning opportunity" (Japan); "the longer (the agency) works with a partner, the more external evaluation is appreciated and acts as a motivating factor to initiate the learning process" (Switzerland). We "need the participation of national experts who can validate and criticise the results and recommendations." (France) One strong view on this point was made by a consultant with considerable experience in evaluations: ... "evaluations (by donors) were a waste of time as the most important beneficiaries of lessons learned should be the recipient country counterparts and officials. Thus, the purpose of evaluations should be to help and educate them by their taking substantial responsibility for evaluations or, at least, a major substantive role" (Denmark).

Yet a number of Members commented on the difficulties and risks faced in achieving local participation in evaluations. While such participation in joint evaluations has been intensified; "in one case, such participation was refused." (Netherlands) "... officials in recipient countries do not have adequate resources for the necessary organisational and institutional arrangements to assess their own project/programme performance or to use the results of evaluations done by others." (AfDB). "But it is difficult to involve national authorities; they change often and do not know the projects" (France). Another conclusion of interviewees points out that they are "generally favourable to the idea of recipients 'whenever possible' but are somewhat pessimistic about how often in-depth participation is possible", and note the "trade-offs between participation and other values such as independence, timeliness and economy" (Canada).

One Member discovered that "five of the 16 recipient representatives interviewed had some knowledge of the DAC Principles for Evaluation. One of these (in Tanzania) feels that Norwegian evaluations adhere to the DAC Principles and more so than evaluations undertaken by other donors". Another Tanzania representative made the point that "a programme to increase the ability of his

Ministry to plan and perform its own evaluations would have a notable effect on assuring that the Principles would be followed in the future” (Norway).

Summary view of evaluation work in the agency

While some of the following observations are covered in part in the preceding sections, this section of the report provides an opportunity to sum up the views of the users and the interviewers concerning their conclusions as a whole as they relate to Member evaluation work and its relation to the DAC Principles on the Evaluation of Development Assistance.

Overall assessment of central evaluation offices work

Looking at the reports as a whole, it is evident that central evaluation offices are respected for their independence and impartiality and are considered an essential part of the management of development assistance programmes. For some Members this respect is well established; for others it is emerging. Also, the quality of reports is not a dominant issue. Here are some paraphrased conclusions:

- Perceptions of the value of the work have improved since the last survey. The adoption of the synthesis approach has improved the relevance and usefulness of the output; quality of reports remain generally high. Most importantly, there is a wide acknowledgement of the necessity for, and value of, an independent evaluation programme. Compliance with the DAC Principles is generally good. (UK)
- Evaluation unit independence within the Ministry has been guaranteed by the guideline that what to evaluate is the Minister’s responsibility and how to evaluate is the evaluation units responsibility. (Netherlands)
- The quality of the central evaluation function has improved. (Finland)
- The role of evaluation is judged to be favourable; a culture of evaluation is emerging. There is progress over the past years on impartiality and independence. Evaluation is not contested and products are known. (France)
- The evaluation unit is well established and highly productive; it is much appreciated. (European Commission)
- We have found a fair degree of coherence between the DAC Principles and actual practice. (Canada)
- Evaluations are of good quality; they are seen as relevant and useful. (Austria)
- Overall, the evaluation unit has received good recognition especially from annual reports. The most successful function of evaluations is its role in ensuring the transparency of ODA for the general public. (Japan)

- Overall, users consider the mandate, role and tasks of the evaluation unit are of great importance. (Norway)

However, these positive views need to be qualified. Some of the conclusions pointing to areas of concern relate to the relevance and usefulness of evaluation work, particularly to senior managers and policy-makers. Weaknesses in dissemination and integrating lessons learned in operations are a major concern :

- Performance is good but the evaluation unit's lack of co-operation is hampering its effectiveness and diminishes the degree to which evaluation results get used. Management views the evaluation unit as being too independent and the work of little use to them; no systematic link between evaluation results and policy formulation. Management's orientation to evaluation as a controlling tool has a detrimental effect on the use of evaluations. (Finland)
- The knowledge of evaluation work is limited; participation only in annual plans. The evaluation unit is moderately supported but does not have adequate resources. (Austria)
- There is a need to raise the profile of evaluation and reinforce the application of lessons in the design of new operations. (AfDB)
- The evaluation unit concentrates too much on outputs (reports) and not enough on actual and potential effects of its work. (Norway)
- Evaluations are least successful in determining the success/failure of each project; users are not satisfied with success rating systems. (Japan)
- There is less progress with reference to relevance, usefulness and impact of reports, presentation and dissemination. (UK)

A common and often stated problem with evaluations by most Members is well reflected in the following comment. "Evaluation effectiveness is handicapped by problems in their technical implementation and presentation of results: reports are too long and too complex to be internalised. Also greater participation in evaluations by staff would improve utilisation and not necessarily compromise independence" (Finland). An earlier study of feedback by UNDP brings out a number of interesting observations of general interest on the fact that feedback from evaluations is not integrated in programme functions. Some of these observations are:

- the system's bias is towards operational concerns and away from reflection;
- professional ego was seen as an obstacle to the increased use of feedback -- an attitudinal problem;
- incentives to seek out feedback are few and use of feedback in increasing individual accountability could have career consequences;
- none of the current instruments (e.g. for project design) emphasise concern for lessons learned as an issue that requires time and thought;

- there is no clear understanding as to how lessons learned are meant to be conceptualised;
- there are no compliance systems to ensure stocktaking of lessons learned;
- the analytical process of drawing transferable lessons from experience is far more demanding, rigorous and time-consuming than may appear at first sight.

Role of the DAC Principles of Evaluation

The DAC Principles document has attracted few readers and the Principles, as stated in the DAC document, are not well known. However, the Principles, primarily those related to independence, impartiality, and credibility, are recognised as part of the evaluation culture. Several Members have raised the issue of possible contradictions in maintaining independence, on one hand, and ensuring the use of evaluations and learning lessons through more direct involvement by policy, line management and operations staffs, on the other. One Member (Canada) concluded that the DAC Principles should be considered in the context of the evolution of evaluation practice. They should be updated with stronger emphases on results. Also, the distinction between principles and processes (best practices) need to be clarified.

Decentralised evaluations

In general decentralised evaluations are considered more relevant and useful for operating staff than for the products of central evaluations units; although they are, at best, of mixed quality and are open to challenges on impartiality. A systematic review of decentralised evaluations has not been undertaken by most Members, with the exception of the Netherlands and Sweden. Observations from the surveys suggest that decentralised evaluations are not very homogenous (Austria), do not meet the high standards of the central evaluation office; also, the useful information that is available in decentralised evaluations reports is lost owing to poor information exchange systems (Finland). In general, decentralisation of evaluation work is expanding and becoming a challenge to the central evaluation unit and to the DAC Principles (UK).

Dissemination and integrating lessons learned in agency operations

The adequacy of dissemination practices of central evaluation units is a major concern in the Members' surveys. The issue is not just a matter of turning out shorter reports, more readable products and improving access, although these are areas where most of the Members are weak, according to the interviews. What accounts for the differences in impact of evaluations?

There is a great number of factors cited in the reports. Two stand out as particularly important, assuming the evaluations are basically well done. First, the reports stressed the importance of the demand factor. Does senior management state and enforce its interest in following up on recommendations and applying lessons learned? This is not uniform among agencies nor necessarily sustained; or, in some cases, it is downgraded into a "boiler-plate" paragraph in project documents. One report points out that "no amount of dissemination will have the desired effect without management emphasis on lesson-learning and clear signals to staff regarding its importance" (World Bank). This theme is evident in many Members' reports. On the other hand, some Members referred

to management-level reviews of reports (directly, or as a function of quality support groups considering new projects) and their recommendations aimed at taking appropriate action (Denmark, European Commission, France). In any event, integrating findings and recommendations into policies and programmes is the responsibility of the policy-makers, senior management and operations departments. Many users feel that there is a need to stimulate learning by conducting staff workshops and seminars. (Norway, AfDB). A distinction needs to be made between formal and specific actions on evaluation recommendations (more common) and the use of the lessons learned from evaluations (more difficult and less common).

The second factor that is vital in achieving impact from evaluations comes under the heading of dissemination -- the supply side of the evaluation function. In this context, dissemination is an umbrella term that covers a wide range of activities related to getting the message out: well-written concise reports, use of summaries, adaptations of summaries to different audiences, dissemination mechanisms, and accessibility with "just-in-time" information services. Some Members have highly developed dissemination programmes with an abundance of documents in varied forms for different audiences (World Bank, USAID). In these situations there "may be information overload but with high costs of searching out lessons to sort through what is valid" (World Bank). It is also noted that evaluation units should regularly monitor follow-up. In so doing, they should "answer two questions: how far, why and why not have subsequent policy changes actually been implemented; what is the capacity of the system to absorb and implement different policy changes in a given period of time ... (Netherlands)". Evaluation units concentrate too much on outputs (reports) and not enough on actual and potential effects of its work (Norway). Member reports suggest that there are wide differences in the extent to which they are involved in the dissemination activities of evaluation work.

Beyond the demand and supply features of evaluations, as some have reported, is the importance of having a "learning culture" or, more specifically, an "evaluation culture" in the organisation. One Member pointed out that "... the fundamental need is to re-enforce in the Bank an evaluation culture which would permeate throughout all of its (the Bank's) operational and policy activities" (AfDB). Another interviewee pointed out that the reports "as a group permit the enrichment of the culture of the heads of missions and their collaborators in terms of improving the effectiveness of projects as they are conceived and developed" (France). One concern in integrating lessons may lie in the receptivity of staff and their interest and ability to absorb and react to the lessons; also, they may feel that their situation is unique (World Bank).

Improved approaches to evaluations and new directions

Some Members included recommendations in their reports. Most of these are agency-specific and not of general interest. However, some comments suggested topics for further consideration. For example, as evaluations move into broader topics with political implications, it has been suggested that a unit's strategy to establish credibility is to foresee political and methodological attacks on the evaluation findings and to incorporate sufficient defences against potential attacks; one way is to ensure transparent self-criticism of the methodology (Netherlands).

Several reports have indicated that users do not consider the annual planning for evaluations and the selections of topics and projects to be transparent, and that users' suggestions have not always been incorporated. As one report noted: users in all categories would appreciate a more structured way of assessing user needs before preparing the evaluation programme (Netherlands). In

new fields such as conflict prevention and conflict management and rehabilitation, evaluators should try to support policy-makers, management, and staff as quickly as possible. The purpose would be to get an understanding of what has been learned about particular themes or policies, what has not been learned, and areas of disagreement (Netherlands).

Generally, as evaluators take on evaluations in the broader areas of sectors and themes, there may be a need to reconsider how the Principles apply and what modifications may be necessary to have a greater impact at the policy and senior management levels of their agencies. On this point, one report observed that the context for evaluation work has been changing. In the reorientation of development assistance work, more attention is being given to overarching objectives of poverty reduction, governance issues (elections, the role of civil societies, human rights), to the cross-cutting themes of women in development, the environment, to major collaborative evaluations of international emergency and multi-donor programmes, the expanded roles of NGOs, to new instruments of assistance such as sector support (investment, expenditure) programmes, and internal management and programming systems. Taking on these subjects, for example, raises questions of the importance of maintaining close collaboration with technical and policy staff at the planning stage while maintaining the independence and integrity of the evaluation operations. It also raises questions about the professional capacities of evaluation staff and evaluators relative to these broader interests. And timing requirements for major policy-oriented evaluations need to be addressed so that their results can be fed into policy work before it is completed (Denmark).

Appendix 2 /Annex 1: Coverage of the Survey of Users: participating members

Member and Option Selected	Interviews (approx. number)	Sr. Mgt Boards	Operating/ Tech Staffs	External: Legislatures, Other agencies, NGOs, Press	Recipients/ Missions	Comments
Austria (DDC/MFA) 3	3 prelim	X				Survey continuing
Belgium (AGDC) 3	pending	X	X			Staff Survey
Canada (CIDA) 2	Eval. Dept.		Eval staff			
Denmark (DANIDA) 1	27	X	X	Parliament, Press, NGO, Consulting Firm	X	Consultant Survey
European Commission (DG-Dev) 1	20	X	X			Consultant Survey
Finland Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1	62	X	X	Parliament, MFA, NGOs, Consultants, Media	X	Consultant Survey
France: Ministry of Co-operation 1	38	X	X	National Assembly, MFA, CFD, EC, NGOs	X	Consultant Survey
Germany (BMZ)	none					Staff note
Japan (ECB/MFA, OECF, JICA) 3	64		X	MFA, Other Agencies	X	Consultant Survey
Netherlands (IOB/MFA) 1	83	X	X	Parliament, NGOs	X	Consultant Survey
Norway (MFA & NORAD) 1	34	X	X	Parliament, NGO	X	Consultant Survey
Sweden (SIDA) 2	40		Eval. Mgrs.			Specially designed study- consultants -1997
Switzerland (SDC) 3	16	X	X			In-house workshop & mgt interviews
United Kingdom (DfID) 1	24	X	X		X	Consultant Survey
United States (USAID) 2	46	X	X		X	Customer Service Staff Survey - 1996
African Development Bank 1	50				X	Consultant Survey
Asian Development Bank 1	Questionnaires 107; Interviews 35	X	X		X	Staff Survey
UNDP 2	85			UN Headquarters, UN Agencies, Donors	X	Survey conducted in 1993
World Bank (OED)2	14		Task Mgrs			Special Task Force

**Appendix 2/ Annex 1 (continued): Coverage of the Survey of Users:
participating members note on legend**

Notes on columns and entries:

Column 1: includes the option chosen for the interview process;

Column 2: provides the number of interviews conducted including the number in focus groups as best as can be determined from the individual reports;

Column 3: the X indicates that senior management and, in some instances, boards of directors were interviewed;

Column 4: the X indicates where operating and technical staffs were interviewed individually or in focus groups; where Xs are replaced with a designation, they indicate that only staff Members in those categories were interviewed; the notations without X indicate the actual group interviewed.

Column 5: describes the location of those interviewed who were outside of the agency;

Column 6: the Xs refer to those instances where questionnaires were sent to overseas missions and responses provided; however, the reports make it difficult to distinguish between the views of the mission staffs, their views of recipient country officials, and the views of these latter officials directly;

Column 7: indicates how the survey was conducted.

Appendix 3.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PHASE I

Introduction

The DAC Expert/ Group on Aid Evaluation has requested a review of the Members' experience with the application of the DAC "Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance"- that were endorsed by the DAC High-Level Meeting, December 3-4, 1991.¹ The aim of this review is to assess "compliance or non-compliance with the Principles" and their "impact, usefulness and relevance." The plan for this review provides for two phases: (1) responses to a questionnaire and a related synthesis and, possibly, (2) a more in-depth review of experience based on direct interviews with evaluators and the users of evaluations and an examination of representative evaluation reports. This questionnaire responds to the first phase only. A draft synthesis report is to be completed by about March 31 and will be circulated to the Members for their April meeting.

Scope of the questionnaire

The objective of the questionnaire is to provide the basic information for developing a synthesis that describes and assesses the patterns of experience of the Members' evaluation offices in applying the Principles. While the responses to the questionnaire will contain evaluative information on the evaluation activity of each of the Members' agencies, this information will not be shared separately and will not be available outside of the Experts Group, subject to the guidance of the Steering Committee. In instances where some portion of an agency's response illustrates an interesting viewpoint or approach that may be of general interest, this material may be used in the synthesis with the agreement of the member. In the spirit of the Principles, the aim is to obtain information that is impartial, credible and useful on the Experts Group's experience that can guide possible revisions or elaboration of the Principles.

The questionnaire requests a brief statistical profile of the evaluations undertaken since the "Principles" were adopted. Questions are, then, provided on each of the principles as they are presented in the "Principles" document. Space is also provided for summary statements on experience with each of the principles. A brief questionnaire is provided for the users of evaluations to express their views on the application of key points of the "Principles." The aim, as noted in the request for this review, is to assess Member adoption of the Principles, Member compliance with the principles, and the usefulness of the Principles,

Procedure for responding to the questionnaire

Members will, of course, determine how best to proceed with preparing their responses to the questionnaire. We hope, however, that each member will see this as an opportunity for a careful self-assessment of their evaluation operations for their own benefit as well as for the DAC Expert Group on Aid Evaluation generally. Some suggested steps are:

1. Have available a list of the evaluations that have been initiated during the period 1992/95. The list will be helpful in guiding responses as many of the questions relate to the experience with these evaluations as a group. Also have a copy of the Principles available for reference as the full text is not quoted in the questionnaire. (The numbers in parentheses in each section of the questionnaire refer to paragraphs in the "Principles" document.)
2. The questions in sections 3-10 are focused on the evaluation work of central evaluations offices. A special section 11 on the decentralised evaluation systems has been provided. While the questions may be similar to those in the preceding sections, they address the evaluation work conducted by agency offices other than central evaluation office. However, a complete coverage of decentralised evaluation has not been attempted in this questionnaire.
3. Members may wish to arrange to have two or three evaluation office staff participate together in completing the responses to the questions. This may help provide a broader perspective on experience in applying the "Principles".
4. Complete the answers to each question as described and add brief explanatory notes where asked or as desired to clarify a response. Members are encouraged to provide brief comments at the end of each section. Such comments will help to enrich the synthesis. (Explanatory notes may be hand written, if legible, or separate sheets may be attached with references to each question's number.)
5. Make photocopies of the completed questionnaire for your files.

QUESTIONNAIRES SHOULD BE SENT TO ARRIVE BY MONDAY, FEBRUARY 29, 1996

Thank you for your co-operation.

1. Profile of evaluation reports

Purpose of profile

The purpose of the profile is to provide a picture of the volume and types of evaluation activity that has taken place since the Principles were adopted. For each evaluation office this profile constitutes the group of evaluations to be considered when responding to the questionnaire. Please provide a profile of the evaluations that have been initiated since the statement of DAC "Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance" was adopted, i.e., during the period January 1992 to December 1995.

How many evaluations by type were initiated during the period January 1992-December 1995?

- 1.1 Evaluations of on-going projects and programs (mid-term) by the central evaluation office
- 1.2 Project completion reports
- 1.3 Project impact evaluations
- 1.4 Sector impact evaluations
- 1.5 Evaluations of cross-cutting or multi-sectoral projects/programs
- 1.6 Evaluations of emergency assistance
- 1.7 Evaluations of non-project assistance
- 1.8 Evaluations of management operations
- 1.9 Joint evaluations with other donors
- 1.10 Joint evaluations with recipient countries
- 1.11 "Participatory" evaluation, i.e. conducted mainly by stakeholders
- 1.12 Other types: specify

1.13 Total number of evaluations initiated during period (the sum of types may exceed total as there may be some overlapping.)

1.14. Number of evaluations of all types conducted during the period by agency offices other than central evaluation offices, i.e., decentralised evaluation activity

1.15 Observations on profile:

2. Purpose of evaluation

2.1. The statement of purpose of evaluation in the Principles is quoted below: does this statement adequately express the purpose and role of evaluation as viewed by the Member's agency?

- a. ___ in complete agreement (no changes required), b. ___ some modifications necessary,
- c. ___ needs restatement.

2.2. If it needs modification or restatement, underline those phrases that are inadequate, unclear, not appropriate or need modification, and (optional) add suggestions that should be included.

The main purposes of evaluation are:

- to improve future aid policy, programmes and projects through feedback of lessons learned;
- to provide a basis for accountability, including the provision of information to the public."(6)

Through the evaluation of failures as well as successes, valuable information is generated which, if properly fed back, can improve future aid programmes and projects. Funds for development purposes are scarce compared to the needs, and stakeholders in donor and recipient countries should be enabled to draw to the fullest possible extent on experience to optimise resource use. (7)

The accountability notion of evaluation referred to here relates to the developmental results and impact of development assistance. It is distinct from accountability for the use of public funds in an accounting and legal sense, responsibility for the latter usually being assigned to an audit institution. Information about the results of development assistance should be provided to the public and their leaders in both donor and recipient countries. (8)

An important purpose of evaluation is to bring to the attention of policy-makers constraints on developmental aid success resulting from policy shortcomings or rigidities both on the donor and recipient side, in adequate co-ordination, and the effectiveness of other practices, such as procurement. (9)

Evaluation promotes the dialogue and improves co-operation between the participants in the development process through mutual sharing of experiences at all levels." (10)

2.3 Comment on statement of purpose of evaluation:

3. Impartiality and independence

Principle 3: ---The evaluation process should be impartial and independent in its function from the process concerned with the policy making, the delivery, and the management of development assistance."(11)

3.1. Institutional structure for managing evaluation (14-17)

3.1.1. The chief evaluation officer and evaluation unit report to: *(select one)*

- a. __the head of the agency;
- b. __the policy formulation unit;
- c. __the governing board or council;
- d. __the senior line (operations) management;
- e. __ management committee;
- f. __other (describe:

3.1.2. The chief evaluation officer is selected by and can be removed by: *(select one)*

- a. __the head of the agency;
- b. __the head of the policy formulation unit;
- c. __the governing board or council;
- d. __the senior line (operations) management;
- e. __other (describe):

- 3.1.3. (a) Does the chief evaluation officer have a fixed term of office? Yes__ No__
- (b) Can s/he return to other employment in the agency after an assignment as head of the evaluation office? Yes__; No__
- 3.1.4. Does the evaluation office have a:
- (i) separate annual budget authorised by the agency head and/or governing board? Yes__; No__.
- (ii) If not, who allocates funding for the evaluations?
- 3.1.5. Does the evaluation office have the authority to:
- (a) select which projects to evaluate? Yes__, No__
- (b) approve an evaluation program? Yes__, No__
- If no, who has the authority to approve the evaluation program and choice of projects to be evaluated?
- 3.1.6. Does the agency have an official policy statement that specifies the organisational relationships, responsibilities, procedures, transparency, and independence requirements for the evaluation office?
- Yes__; No__, Partial (list features not explicitly covered
- 3.1.7. Does the evaluation office have the authority to approve terms of reference/scopes of work and the selection of evaluators? Yes_ No_. Are there exceptions? (Comment:
- 3.1.8. Does the institutional structure provide for a formal linkage of evaluation findings to programming and policy making?
- a.___Yes, b.___No, c.___limited. If b or c, describe the linkage..

3.2. Review and revision process (16)

- 3.2.1 Have draft evaluations been reviewed by the responsible program operations managers and other personnel involved in the project or program being evaluated? Yes_ No_ If yes, have the reports been revised to: (*check those applicable*)
- a._correct facts and figures?
- b._modify and tone down critical findings?
- c._add material not included?
- d._modify recommendations?
- c._other: specify
- 3.2.2. Who has the final responsibility for accepting or rejecting proposed revision to a report (*Check one; and explain if varies*)
- a._author?
- b._evaluation manager?
- c._evaluation office head/director?
- d._senior management?
- e._other: specify

3.2.3. How have disagreements on major findings and recommendations been handled? (*Check those applicable*)

a._not accepted?

b._negotiated to reach mutually acceptable language?

c._separate official statement of objections prepared?

d._other: specify:

e._Which of the above four is (i) the most common practice, (ii)_least common practice, (iii)_other approach: specify____

3.3 .4. How are official views of agency management on conclusions and recommendations presented (*check one*)

a._as separate memorandum/report?

b._included in the evaluation report?

c._treated on an ad hoc basis depending on the situation or issue?

d._No procedure?

e._other: specify

3.3 *Have the evaluation reports been issued in the name of (or cite) the authors?*

a._yes for all reports, b._for some reports, c._Never.

3.3.1 The following principle "Independence of evaluations can be further enhanced where reports are issued in the name of authors" is: (13)

a._valid, b._Questionable, c._Never.

State policy

3.4. *Observations on experience with the impartiality and independence principle and (optional) suggested modifications to the text adopted in 1991.*

4. Credibility

Principle 4: "The credibility of evaluation depends on the expertise and independence of the evaluators and the degree of transparency of the evaluation process. Credibility requires that evaluations should report successes as well as failures. Recipient countries should, as a rule, fully participate in evaluation in order to promote credibility and commitment." (18)

4.1. *Professional staff (19)*

4. 1.1 Does the evaluation office have a "critical mass" of professional evaluators and/or evaluation managers (including staff and a recognised pool of evaluation consultants) that establishes confidence in the credibility of reports in all the program areas of the agency's development interests? (*Check one*)

- a. __ Yes, in all program areas;
- b. __ In the important program areas but not all areas;
- c. __ Shortages in some key program areas;
- d. __ Inadequately staffed to meet demands for agency evaluation requirements.

4.1.2 Does the evaluation office have access to a recognised pool of evaluation consultants (external) that establish confidence in the credibility of reports in all programme areas of the agency's development interests: (check one)

- a. __ Yes, in all program areas;
- b. __ In the important program areas but not all areas;
- c. __ Shortages in some key program areas;
- d. __ Inadequate to meet demands for agency evaluation requirements

4.1.3 For which program areas and types of evaluations has the evaluation office been less well staffed to provide credible evaluations?

(Specify area/type) a. __, b. __ d. __, d. __

4.1.4. For which program areas and types of evaluations has the evaluation office been best staffed including consultants to provide credible evaluations?

(Specify area/type) a. __, b. __ d. __, d. __

4.2 **Resources for evaluations**

4.2.1 How many professional staff (not including consultants or administrative support staff) are assigned to the evaluation office?

In this number of staff able to handle the volume of evaluation work that the office is expected to carry out? __ About right __ somewhat short __ completely inadequate . Comments

4.2.2. Approximately what percent of the agency's annual programme budget is:

- a. For the central evaluation office annual budget? __ %
- b. For the agency total evaluation budget (annual) including decentralised evaluation work? __ % Comments

4.3 **Reporting successes and failures (18)**

4.3.1 Important project/programme successes (accomplishments) have been cited in evaluation reports (check one):

- a. __ consistently without exception (100 %);
- b. __ in most but not all reports (60% or more);
- c. __ rarely, only in a few of the reports (20% -60%)
- d. __ Rarely, only in a few report (less than 20%).

4.3.2 Project/program significant failures (lack of accomplishments) have been cited in evaluation reports (*check one*):

- a. __consistently without exception (100 %);
- b. __in most but not all reports (60% or more);
- c. __rarely, only in a few of the reports (20%-60%).
- d. __Really, only in a few of the reports (less than 20 %)

4.3.3. Has experience indicated that learning from lessons in evaluations is more effective from (*Check one*)

- a. __information on successes?
- b. __information on failures?
- c. __about the same?
- d. __no conclusion.

4.4 Support and documentation for the findings and lessons in the evaluation reports.

4.4.1. The analytical support with documentation and data: (*check those appropriate*)

- a. __has not been a problem (all reports are well documented);
- b. __has been a problem but not a major one;
- c. __has been a continuing problem for most of the reports;
- d. __has been a problem owing to the time constraints on information gathering;
- e. __has been a problem owing to the lack of data on key points such as cause/effect relationships.
- f. __Other: specify

4.4.2 How the disagreement on data, analysis, and conclusions among the evaluation team members has been resolved (Check the ones reflecting the most common experience)

- a. __up to leader to decide
- b. __evaluation manager decides or works out understanding
- c. __minority report submitted with final report
- d. __team member resigns from evaluation task
- e. __disagreements rarely occur
- f. __other: describe

4.5 Transparency (20)

4.5.1. Has information about the evaluation process (terms of reference/scope of work, choice of evaluators, analysis, findings and recommendations in reports) been: (*select one choice under each category a, b, c*):

- a. Available agency -wide to manager and staff: (i) __without exception through; (ii) __by governing body (board, council); (iii) __only to manager responsible for project?
- b. Available to legislation groups: (i) __ without exception throughout process; (ii) __only after report is reviewed by senior manager and/or governing body (board, council); (iii) __only to managers directly responsible for project?
- c. Available to public and press: (i) __without exception throughout process; (ii) __only after reviewed by senior management and/or governing body (board, council); (iii) __rarely; (iv) __only if and/when published;
- d. Other features of transparency policy: openness or restrictions -describe:

4.5.2. Have evaluation reports distinguished between findings, conclusions and recommendations in their presentation in the reports: *(select one)*

- a. __consistently (90-100 %);
- b. __in most but not all reports (60-80%);
- c. __in some reports (20%-60%)
- d. __rarely, only in a few of the reports (20% or less)
- e. __other: describe

4.5.3 Have sources that establish the basis for the findings been cited in the reports:

- a. __consistently (90-100 %);
- b. __in most but not all reports (60-80%);
- c. __in some reports (20%-60%)
- d. __rarely, only in a few of the reports (20% or less)
- e. __sources not cited
- f. Comment on practice:

4.6 *Has the participation of recipient country officials/national consultants increased the credibility of the evaluation process and report: (18)*

- 4.6.1. for donor management: __Yes__No__, No effect; __Not known.
- 4.6.2. for the recipient country management: __Yes__No__, No effect; __Not known
- 4.6.3. How does recipient country participation affect the credibility of the evaluation process?

4.7 *Observations on experience with the credibility principle and (optional) suggested modifications to the text adopted in 1991.*

5. Usefulness

Principle 5: To have an impact on decision-making, evaluation findings must be perceived as relevant and useful and be presented in a clear and concise way. They should fully reflect the different interests and needs of the many parties involved in development co-operation." (21)

5.1. Timeliness (22)

5.1.1. Have evaluations been completed on a timely basis, i.e., in time to affect decision- making related to the findings and recommendations at appropriate stages in program or project operations? (*Check one*)

- a. __consistently timely without exception (100 %);
- b. __timely for most but not all evaluations (over 60%);
- c. __usually timely (20-60%)
- d. __rarely, for only a few of the evaluations (less than 20%).

Comments

5.1.2 What are the most common reasons for delays in making reports available to decision-makers on a timely basis? (*Check those applicable*)

- a. __under estimation of the scope of the task and the time required?
- b. __decision-makers determined to proceed without evaluation findings?
- c. __problems getting suitable data?
- d. __problems with selecting evaluation team members and/or with conflicts among team members?
- e. __problems with management reviews?
- f. __logistical constraints?
- g. __other: specify
- h. __Which of those checked above have been the main cause(s) of delays? (*Provide letter to identify*)

5.2. Ease of access to promote use of evaluation findings, recommendations, lessons learned.(21)

5.2. 1. Have the reports provided a section on lessons learned? (*Check one*)

Yes, all reports_; in most reports_; not provided_

5.2.3. Have the reports been widely distributed in summary form such as: (*check those applicable*)

- a. __published report as written
- b. __published report after editing out sensitive material
- c. __in executive summaries,
- d. __an abstracts;
- e. __on electronic text databases;
- f. __through periodic publications of digests of evaluations;
- g. __development information reference services;
- h. __other: specify

5.3. "The evaluation process itself promotes a further (i) clarification of objectives, (ii) improves communication, (iii) increases learning, and (iv) lays the groundwork for follow-up action." (21)

5.3.1. Have evaluations during the past four years been: *(check one)*

- a. ☐ highly successful in fulfilling all of these purposes;
- b. ☐ successful only in a few instances;
- c. ☐ largely unsuccessful.
- d. Rank each of the above categories in 5.3 separately (1 highest to 4 lowest) as highly successful to unsuccessful : i. ☐; ii. ☐; iii ☐; iv. ☐.

5.3.2. Have the recommendations in the reports reviewed by your office been acted on? *(Check one)*

- a. ☐ consistently;
- b. ☐ a high percent (over half);
- c. ☐ a low percentage (about 25% or less)
- d. ☐ none.

5.3.3. If the answer to 5.3.2. is a 'low percentage or none', what appear(s) to be the main reason(s)? *(Check those applicable)*

- a. ☐ Recommendations not actionable as presented;
- b. ☐ Disagreement with the conclusions that led to the recommendations;
- c. ☐ Necessary actions called for already taken;
- d. ☐ Not an important issue that needs attention;
- e. ☐ Others: specify

5.3.4 If the answer is a. or b. In 5.3.2., how have the recommendations been acted on? *(Check those most common)*

- a. ☐ in new or revised policy statements;
- b. ☐ new or revised operation manual
- c. ☐ special guidance messages to staff;
- d. ☐ call for project/programme revisions;
- e. ☐ request for additional study(ies)
- f. ☐ other specify

5.4 "...evaluation has an important role to play at various stages during the execution of a project or program and should not be conducted only as an ex post exercise. ...Provisions for evaluation by independent evaluation staffs in the plan of operation constitute an important complement to regular monitoring." (22)

5.4.1. Independent evaluations as complements to monitoring systems have been provided for: *(check one)*

- a. ☐ in all projects and program plans with requisite budgets;
- b. ☐ in only selected project and program plans;
- c. ☐ not provided for in projects and program plans;
- d. ☐ covered by plans and funding separate from the projects and programs;
- e. ☐ Other: specify

5.4.2. The central evaluation office has responsibility for ensuring the implementation of evaluation plans contained in project and program plans: ☐ Yes, ☐ No, ☐ for some project but not other; Other specify

5.5 Observations on experience with the usefulness principle and (optional) suggested modifications to the text adopted in 1991

6. Participation of donors and recipients

Principle 6: "Consistent with the partnership principle stressed above, whenever possible, both donors and recipients should be involved in the evaluation process.--- (23)

6.1. Participation in evaluations of recipient country officials with responsibility for project/program operations (26)

6.1.1 Have recipient country officials participated in all phases of the evaluation process (definition of the TOR, choice of evaluators, report preparation/revisions, use/dissemination of)? *(check one)*

- a. ☐ consistently in all evaluations without exception (100)
- b. ☐ in most, but not all reports (over 60%);
- c. ☐ frequentel (60-20%)
- d. ☐ rarely, only in a few of the reports (less than 20%);
- e. ☐ none.

6.1.2 If only partial participation, in which phase(s) of the evaluation process have recipient country officials participated: *(check which phase(s))*

- a. definition of the TOR,
- b. choice of evaluators,
- c. report preparation/revisions,
- d. use/dissemination)

6.1.3 What is/are the primary reason(s) for not including recipient country officials in the evaluation process such as sensitive donor issues, recipient's lack evaluation capacities, recipient's do not wish to participate, high costs, cause delays? *(List in order of importance)*

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.

6.2. *Participation of recipient country professional organisations, collaborating organisations and national consultants.*

6.2.1. Have recipient country organisations cited above participated in the evaluation process:

- a. __consistently in all evaluations without exception (100
- b. __in most, but not all reports (over 60%);
- c. __frequentel (60-20%)
- d. __rarely, only in a few of the reports (less than 20%);
- e. __none.

6.3. *Participation of the affected groups. (24)*

6.3.1. Have the affected groups participated in the evaluation process? (*Check applicable category and list types of projects in d.*)

- a. in all stages of the evaluations: __rarely, __consistently; __only for certain types of projects.
- b. views sought during evaluation field work: __rarely, __consistently, __only for certain types of projects.
- c. comments sought only on draft report: __rarely, __consistently, __only for certain types of projects.
- c. If for certain types of projects, what types?

6.4. *Participation "gives opportunity for learning by doing and will strengthen skills and capacities in the recipient country."(25)*

6.4.1. Have the evaluations involving recipient participation made provision for this objective? (*check one*)

- a. __Yes, b. __No, c. __in a few instances.

6.4.2. Is it an effective way to advance capacity building for evaluation?

- __Very effective, __minimally effectively, __not effective.

6.4.3. Does participation result in more useful and higher quality evaluation reports? (*Check one*)

a. ☐ substantially improved in usefulness and quality;

b. ☐ minimally better;

c. ☐ reduces usefulness and quality;

d. ☐ other: specify

6.5. *Have there been evaluations by recipient countries of donor supported projects that have not provided in the evaluations?*

a. ☐ Yes, b. ☐ No, c. ☐ not known.

6.6. *Observations on experience with the participation principle and (optional) suggested modifications to the text adopted in 1991.*

7. Donor co-operation

Principle 7: "Collaboration between donors is essential in order to learn from each other and to avoid duplication of effort."

7.1. *Donor collaboration to "develop evaluation methods, share reports and information, and improve access to evaluation findings."*

7.1.1 Experience with arrangements for collaboration on methods, reports, and findings. (*Rate each of the following separately: scale of-most effective to 4-least effective*)

a. ☐ bilateral meeting of evaluation offices;

b. ☐ DAC Experts Group meetings;

c. ☐ document exchanges (abstracts, manuals, etc.)

d. ☐ electronic access to each others evaluation databases;

e. ☐ in-recipient country donor co-ordination meetings;

f. ☐ international evaluation conferences;

g. ☐ joint evaluations;

h. ☐ other: specify

7.2 *Joint donor evaluations to improve understanding of each others' procedures and approaches.*

7.2.1. Has evaluation office experience with joint evaluations been: (*check one*)

- a. __uniformly highly satisfactory?
- b. __occasionally satisfactory?
- c. __rarely satisfactory?
- d. __unsatisfactory?
- e. __never participated in joint evaluation.

7.2.2 What are the primary reasons for the highly satisfactory and/or the unsatisfactory experiences with joint evaluations? (*List reasons*)

- a. __Highly satisfactory;
- b. __Unsatisfactory

7.2.3 Do joint evaluations reduce, in fact, the administrative burden on the recipient?

- a. __Yes, b. __No, c. __Somewhat, d. __ no information.

7.2.4 What has been the response of the recipient country officials to joint evaluations? (*Check one, add explanation*)

- a. __enthusiastic, b. __opposed, c. __reluctantly accepting, d. __depends on the circumstances such as

7.2.5 Are there ways of conducting joint evaluations that have been found effective?

7.2.6 Sharing of evaluation plans systematically well ahead of their implementation is:

- a. __highly desirable, b. __ not possible, c. __rarely useful. Comment :

7.3 *Observations on experience with the donor co-operation principle and (optional) suggested modifications to the text adopted in 1991.*

8. Evaluation programming

Principle 8: "An overall plan must be developed by the agency for the evaluation of development assistance."

8.1 *Evaluation plans*

8.1.1. An evaluation plan has been prepared by the evaluation office: (*check one*)

- a. __annually
- b. __in 3-5 year cycles;
- c. __as the demand from management requires (ad hoc);
- d. __not prepared;
- e. __other: specify

8.1.2. If a plan was made, were priorities set by "category with timetables" for implementation?

a. __yes, b. __no, c. __ flexible and easily changed.

8.1.3. Have the "categories represented the various areas of [the agency's] development assistance?- The number of evaluations have been proportional to agency's areas of some areas of agency development assistance not well program activity:

a. __yes, b. __no, C. __covered such as

8.1.4. Have "evaluations on a more comprehensive scale" that permit "an aggregation of results" been included in the evaluation plan?

a. __Yes. occasionally, b. __Yes, but rarely, c. __have not been included.

8.2. *Who has recommended and who has determined what evaluations should be undertaken and their timing? (Check appropriate responses)*

8.2.1.the evaluation office: a. __Recommended; b. __determined.

8.2.2.line operations staff: a. __Recommended; b. __detennined.

8.2.3.senior management: a. __Recommended; b. __determined.

8.2.4.Other specify: a. __Recommended; b. __determined.

8.3. *Guidelines and/or standards for the evaluation process. (Check one for a and one for b)*

8.3.1. Have guidelines on standards for evaluations been prepared and applied?

a. Prepared: __yes; __no; __in process; __not planned;

b. Applied: __yes; __no; __not consistently.

8.4. *Observations on experience with the evaluation programming principle and (optional) suggested modifications to the text adopted in 1991.*

9. Design and implementation of evaluations

Principle 9: "Each evaluation must be planned and terms of reference drawn up in order to: define the purpose and scope of the evaluation; describe the methods to be used; identify the standards; determine the resources and time required."

9.1 *The terms of reference (TOR) covering purpose, scope, methods, standards for the evaluations in the 1992-95 group:*

a. __have been consistently well thought out and complete and have not required amendment;

b. __have generally met the requirements;

c. __have required amendment or adaptation during evaluation process;

d. __have not been followed closely and adjusted informally.

9.2. The stronger and weaker sections of the TORs compared to the other sections

- a. Purpose and scope of the evaluation: __weaker;__stronger
- b. Identification of recipients of findings: __weaker;__stronger;
- c. Definition of activity to be evaluated: __weaker;__stronger;
- d. Methods used during evaluations: __weaker;__stronger;
- e. Standards against which performance assessed: __weaker;__stronger;
- f. Questions/issues to be addressed defined: - __weaker;__stronger;
- g.__Not differences.

9.3 How well have the evaluations been structured around the following basic issue areas? (see Principles statement for details) (rate each one separately 1-highest through 4-lowest rating)

- a.__Rationale for the activity have been:
- b.__Objectives achieved
- c.__Impacts and effects

9.4 How well have the recommendations in a. The overall results (see Principles statement for details) (rate each one separately 1-highest through 4-lowest rating)

- a.__The overall results
- b.__Sustainability
- c.__Alternatives
- d.__Lessons learned

9.5 The methods and techniques used to address the identified issues have been: (check one for a and for b)

- a.__(i) predominately quantitative, __ (ii) predominately qualitative; (iii) __an effective mix of both; (iv) __vary substantially by type of project
- b.__(i) Well defined; (ii). __not defined; c.(iii) Highly varied among the evaluations.

9.6 The evaluators have attempted to establish casual relationships, no matter how complex and difficult: (check one)

- a.__ Consistently, b.__rarely, c.__never.

9.7. Have projects included performance monitoring indicators that specify outputs, outcome, results anticipated and serves as guides for evaluation questions to be addressed? __Yes; __No; __Other

9.7.1 Are project logframe used for this purpose? __Yes; __No

9.7.2 What other approaches are used in performance monitoring linked to evaluations? Explain briefly.

9.8 *Have the design of evaluations employed various evaluation approaches, e.g. desk studies with site verifications, long term periodic data gathering for trends, participatory-stake-holder conducted evaluations, etc.? __Yes; __No. If yes, describe*

9.9 *Are “success rating systems” used in project evaluations? __Yes; __No; __only in specific situations such as..*

9.9.1 provide a brief description of rating systems used

9.10 *Are individual evaluation required to include sections assessing special interests such as environment, gender, poverty, etc.?*

- a. __Yes, in most evaluations; b. __No, only covered in separate evaluations;
c. __Mixed pattern depending on project being evaluated. Comments

9.11 *Observations on experience with the design and implementation principle and, optional, suggested modifications to the text adopted in 1991.*

10. Reporting, dissemination and feedback

Principle 10: "Dissemination and feedback must form a continuous and dynamic part of the evaluation process.--- (43)

10.1 *Reporting should be clear (39):*

10.1.1. Use of technical language in reports has (39): *(check one)*

- a. __been a concern, b __ been specifically avoided, c. __been used only when defined.

10.1.2. The following sections of evaluations reports have been included (39): *(check. one for each letter)*

- a. Executive summary: (i) always-, (ii) never (iii) _ only in some reports.
b. Profile of activity: (i) always_, (ii) never (iii) _ only in some reports.
c. Description of methods: (i) always_, (ii) never (iii) - only in some reports
d. Main findings: (i) always-, (ii) never _, (iii) only in some reports.
e. Lessons learned: (i) always-, (ii) never -, (iii) - only in some reports.
f. Conclusions/recommendations: (i) always_, (ii) never -, (iii) - only in some reports.
g. Other useful features of evaluation office reports include *(list)*:

10.2 *Systematic dissemination of the evaluation reports' Findings, lessons and recommendations (41).*

10.2.1 evaluation reports have been disseminated: *(check those appropriate):*

- a. __to senior management,
- b. __widely within agency,
- c. __to legislators,
- d. __to the public,
- c. __to other donors,
- f. __to recipient countries involved in project,
- g. __other specify
- h. __limitations and restrictions (list)

10.2.2 syntheses/summaries of findings and lessons from a group of reports (by sector, year, etc.) have been disseminated: *(check those appropriate)*

- a. __to senior management,
- b. __widely within agency,
- c. __to legislators,
- d. __to the public,
- e. __to other donors,
- f. __to recipient countries involved in projects,
- g. __Other: specify
- h. __limitations and restrictions (list)

10.2.3 abstracts of findings and lessons have been disseminated: *(check those appropriate)*

- a. __to senior management,
- b. __widely within agency,
- c. __to legislators,
- d. __to the public,
- e. __to other donors,
- f. __to recipient countries involved in projects,
- g. __other: specify
- h. __limitations and restrictions (specify)

10.3 *Feedback ensures that the results of evaluations are utilised in future policy and programme development (42).*

10.3.1 the following feedback mechanisms have been used: *(check those appropriate)*

- a. __permanent evaluation committee reviews
- b. __ad hoc peer group reviews;
- c. __general staff workshops and seminars;
- d. __agency in-house electronic information systems and text databases;
- e. __required senior management responses to findings and recommendations;
- f. __reference and research services responding to inquiries on lessons;
- g. __workshops, meetings, etc. with interested recipient country representatives;
- h. __required responses to findings and recommendations from recipient country officials;
- i. __requirements for inclusion of lessons of experience in new project planning documents;
- j. __reviews with other relevant donors (bilateral exchanges, workshops, etc.)
- k. __other: specify

10.3.2 rating of those feedback mechanisms that have been used: *(list b -v letter from 10.3.1 under appropriate heading a or b.)*

- a. Most useful mechanisms
- b. Least useful mechanisms

10.3.3. Budget and staffing for dissemination work *(check those appropriate)*

- a. Senior management has supported the dissemination operations of evaluation office:
(i) __enthusiastically, (ii) __no interest, (iii) __minimal interest; (iv) __says it is not an evaluation office function.
- b. Evaluation office has special budget and staff for dissemination work: (i) __Yes, (ii) __No, (iii) __included in evaluation staff responsibilities and in budget for each evaluation separately.

10.4. *Observations on experience with the reporting, dissemination, feedback principle and (optional) suggested modifications to the text adopted in 1991. -*

11. Decentralised evaluation system

While the principle do not specifically discuss the question of decentralised evaluation systems, the guidance is equally relevant. Without attempting a comprehensive review of decentralised evaluations, the following questions are intended to gain some insight from those agencies in which offices (department, bureau, overseas mission, etc.) other than the central evaluation office conduct their own evaluations

11.1 Are evaluations of agency projects and programmes conducted by offices other than the central evaluation office?

a. __Yes; b. __no; c. __occasionally

11.2 Does the central evaluations office:

11.2.1 provide standards and guidelines for these evaluations? __Yes; __No

11.2.2 oversee the preparation of annual evaluation programmes for these evaluation? __Yes, __No

11.2.3. monitor the conduct of these evaluations? __Yes; __No

11.2.4 review these evaluations periodically fir they quality and sues? __Yes; __No

11.2.5 participate in other ways in decentralised evaluation? If yes, describe

11.3 From agency reviews of these decentralised evaluations, can it be concluded that they are (Check those that apply to decentralised evaluations as a group)

11.3.1. __uniformly well prepared and meet high evaluations standards

11.3.2. __well used in decision-making

11.3.3 __mixed in the quality

11.3.4. __generally of poor quality lacking independence and credibility

11.3.5. __reflect contractor/consultant tendencies to avoid critical assessments;

11.3.6. __other: specify

12. Application of these Principles and follow-up

12. "DAC Members agree to:

- review their evaluation policies and procedures against the above principles and to adjust them where necessary;
- review evaluation policies and procedures as part of the DAC aid reviews and other relevant work;
- draw the principles to the attention of their developing country partners as a code of good evaluation practice to be followed whenever possible." (44)

12.1 Member's agency statement of policies and procedures on evaluation:

12.1.1. Has management approved a policy statement: a. __Yes, b. __No, c. __in process.

12.1.2 If yes, in what year was it adopted (most recent)

12.2. Review of agency evaluation policies and procedures: (check those appropriate)

12.2.1 Agency evaluation policies and procedures:

a. have been reviewed against the Principles: (i)___Yes; (ii)___No; (iii)___Partially.

b. adjustments in agency policy and procedures have been made to conform with Principles: (i)___Yes; (ii)___No; (iii)___Partially.

12.2.2 The main adjustments made in evaluation policies and procedures reflecting the Principles are in (check those appropriate):

a. ___Impartiality and independence including institutional structure;

b. ___Credibility;

c. ___Usefulness;

d. ___Participation of donors and recipients;

e. ___Donor co-operation;

f. ___Evaluation programming;

g. ___Design and implementation of evaluations;

h. ___Reporting, dissemination and feedback.

12.2.3. The DAC Principles have been used in agency discussions with staff and management as a means to promote changes in agency evaluation policies and procedures:

a. ___effectively;

b. ___with little or no effect;

c. ___not used.

12.3. Review of evaluation policies and procedures in DAC aid reviews and other DAC work:

12.3. 1. Agency evaluation policies and procedures have been included in DAC aid reviews: (check one)
a. ___Yes, b. ___No, c. ___minimally.

12.3.2. Agency evaluation policies and procedures have been reviewed in other DAC work outside of the DAC Experts Group on Aid Evaluation: If yes, in what groups or situations?

12.4. Discussion of the Principles with officials of recipient countries:

a. Representatives of the agency have discussed the Principles with recipient country officials: (i)___Yes; (ii) ___No; (iii)___ partially (only specify the Principles).

b. Have recipient countries with which your agency works adopted any or all of the Principles for their own evaluation operations: (i)___Yes, (ii)___No, (iii)___ no information.

12.5. Observations on the application of, and conformity with, the evaluation principles and (optional) suggested modifications to the text adopted in 1991.

This response to the questionnaire has been prepared by:

Name(s) and title(s):

Organisation unit title:

Member Agency:

Telephone no.

Fax no.

Appendix 4.

THE SURVEY GUIDE FOR PHASE II

Introduction

The DAC Evaluation Group on Aid Evaluation has requested a review of the Members' experience with the application of the Principles of Evaluation that were adopted by the DAC High Level Meeting in December 1991. The aim of the review is to assess "compliance or non compliance with the Principles" and their "impact, usefulness and relevance." The first phase of the review has been completed with the submission of the final report. The first phase was a form of self-evaluation. Members responded to a questionnaire which guided them in making their own assessments of their compliance with the Principles. A summary with an analysis of these responses was presented to the DAC Evaluation Group meeting in April 1996. The final report for Phase I has been completed for the October 1996 meeting.

The DAC Evaluation Group has now decided to proceed with Phase II of the review of the Principles. The second phase of the review focuses on the views of the users of evaluations that have been produced by the central evaluation offices with an opportunity for observations on decentralised evaluations. The aim of this phase is to complete a draft synthesis report on the views of users of evaluations in time for the DAC Evaluation Group meeting in April 1997. In October the Evaluation Group will have an opportunity to establish a common understanding of the purpose and approach for this second phase. The synthesis report for Phase II of the review will provide an assessment of the Members' performance as a whole and their compliance with the Principles as viewed by the users of evaluations. Each Member should find the process instructive in guiding their own efforts to improve the quality and effectiveness of the evaluation work in their agencies. The synthesis report for Phase II will also provide some conclusions and recommendations drawing on the findings of both Phase I and Phase II.

Scope of the survey of users of evaluation

Individual Member assessments, in line with this survey guide, will provide the basis for a synthesis of Member experience with the Principles as viewed by the users of evaluations. From the users' perspective, how well have the central evaluation offices complied with the Principles? What has been the impact, usefulness and relevance of the evaluations prepared by the central evaluation office? The Statement of Principles lays out nine areas of performance criteria for Member evaluation activity: the purpose of evaluation, impartiality and independence, credibility, usefulness, participation of donors and recipients, donor co-operation, evaluation programming, evaluation design and implementation, reporting and dissemination and feedback. Of these areas of the Principles, the survey of users concentrates on:

- the users knowledge of the evaluation work of the central evaluation offices;
- their participation in evaluation processes;
- the quality of the evaluation products including questions of impartiality and credibility;
- the relevance and usefulness to them of the products of evaluation;
- the impact of evaluations and their recommendations and lessons on improving the quality of agency programmes, and;
- an overview assessment of the users awareness of the Principles and the performance of the central evaluation offices on matters of independence and impartiality, organisational relationships and capacities, cost-effectiveness, adequacy of the agency's attention to evaluation.

As some Members have pointed out, the interviewees -- the users of evaluations, may not be aware of the Principles and, thus, not able to participate in a dialogue on them and respond to questions of adherence to the Principles directly. However, the interviewee should be able to elicit observations that bring out the interviewee's conclusions about adherence, in practice, to the Principles.

The main users of evaluations to be interviewed in this survey include:

- agency senior management -- separate and individual interviews with each manager;
- agency operations staffs such as desk officers and project managers -- focus group interviews;
- agency technical staff -- focus group interviews;
- selected individuals in legislative, board of director or other key positions who receive evaluation reports and may use them in their considerations of the agency's development assistance programmes -- separate interviews with each individual;
- selected representatives of implementing organisations such as other government implementing agencies, NGOs, and contractors -- individual or focus group interviews.

Note that these designations may differ among the agencies such as country programme planners, operations desk officers or technical support specialists. The selection of interviewees and focus groups will have to be adapted accordingly.

The procedure for Member user survey interviews

Each agency participating in the user survey phase will:

1. Prepare a list of evaluation products that have been disseminated during the past two-three years. The products include evaluation reports, abstracts, annual summaries, electronic databases, and other types of dissemination activity of the central evaluation office. This list

and an outline of the purpose and scope of the interview is to be made available to the interviewees prior to the interview and serve as a basis for the interview.

2. Select from agency staff or arrange with a contractor the individual who will carry out the survey interviews following the guidance in the interview guide. The individual interviewers conducting the interviews should be knowledgeable about the agency's evaluation activity, the purposes and processes of evaluation, the Principles, and the report prepared for Phase I. The interviewer should be known for competence in interviewing methods and impartiality.
3. Develop a list of interviews to be undertaken: the number of interviews and who is interviewed should be determined as appropriate to the agency. Illustratively, the interviews would include within the agency: the head of the agency and 3-5 senior managers and division heads in separate interviews, and 2-3 focus groups (8-10 people in each session) with operations and technical staffs. Outside the agency, the interviews would include 2-3 interviews with individuals who are legislative or board members. Where appropriate, interviews with focus groups representing implementing agencies is desirable. Each interview should be for about 45 minutes to an hour and a half. Since the sizes and structures of the Member agencies vary, the number of interviews will need to be scaled accordingly.
4. Have each interviewer prepare a summary report that synthesises the results of the interviews -- an outline is provided in the last section.
5. Send the summary report to the Co-ordinating Consultant no later than **31 January 1997**. The Co-ordinating Consultant for the DAC Review of the Principles will prepare an overall synthesis of the individual Member interview survey reports for the DAC Evaluation Group meeting in April 1997.

Interview Guide

The objective of the interviews with users of evaluations is to obtain:

- a clear and frank assessment of the evaluation products of the central evaluation office and their impact on agency policies and programmes, and;
- an understanding of the role of the Principles, directly or indirectly, in guiding agency evaluation policy and work.

Rather than provide a detailed questionnaire, this guide provides a series of topics to be covered in an exchange with the interviewees. Prior to the interviews, it would be desirable to provide those being interviewed with:

1. statement of the purpose of the interview and the DAC Review of the Principles of Aid Evaluation;
2. a list of evaluation office products (reports, abstracts, annual summaries, etc.), and;

3. the topic areas to be covered in the interview.

The following sections outline the several topics to be covered during the interviews as appropriate to the situation.

1) *The users knowledge of the evaluation work of the central evaluation offices*

- How familiar is the interviewee with the work and products of the evaluation office?
- Has s/he read any of the evaluation reports and which ones?
- How thoroughly have the reports been read and reviewed? Which ones?
- Has s/he seen/read any of the abstracts or summaries of evaluation reports? Which ones?
- Has s/he participated in meetings for the purpose of reviewing evaluation reports and their recommendations?

2) *Participation in evaluations*

Has the interviewee participated in any phase of the agency's evaluation work, for example:

- requested that an evaluation of a project or topic be undertaken;
- reviewed and commented on terms of reference for evaluations;
- reviewed or assisted with the selection of evaluators;
- reviewed and commented on draft evaluation reports;
- reviewed and commented on the recommendations in the evaluation reports;
- participated in an evaluation as an evaluator;
- participated in a briefing session or workshop on the report's findings;
- only been advised that an evaluation was taking place;
- have not been involved in any aspect of agency evaluation work.

What is the interviewee's understanding of the purpose of evaluations?

3) *The quality of the evaluation products including questions of impartiality and credibility*

- What are the interviewee's views on the quality of the evaluation reports and other documents?

- Are they readable -- the texts clear and the main points easily and quickly identified and understood?
- Are they balanced and fair in their analyses and findings?
- Are they complete in their coverage?
- Are they well supported by documentation and data?
- Are the evaluators who prepared the reports respected for their impartiality and competence?
- Are the evaluations, in general, credible?

4) *The relevance and usefulness of the products of evaluation*

- Are the evaluation reports, summaries and related documents relevant to the current and future work of agency?
- Are the reports provided on a timely basis so as to be used in decision-making on policies, procedures and project approvals?
- Do they help clarify objectives, improve communication on agency work and performance, increase learning, and provide a basis for follow-up actions?
- Are the recommendations appropriate and acted on? If not, why?
- Are there agency procedures for ensuring that the findings, conclusions and recommendations are integrated into the policies and programming of the agency?
- Are the products of the central evaluation office easily accessed when needed providing useful information on programme/project experience and lessons learned?
- How have you used the conclusions, recommendations, and lessons cited in evaluation reports?

For the operations and technical staffs:

- Are the lessons cited in evaluation reports and other evaluation documents being used in the design of new program and projects? If yes, give examples. If not, why?
- Is the dissemination work of the central evaluation office adequate in reaching those who can make beneficial use of the evaluations and related documents? If not, what is required to make them more useful and used?
- Does senior management provide clear signals and instructions about the importance of using the findings and lessons from evaluations?

5) *The impact of evaluations and their recommendations and lessons on improving the quality of agency programs.*

- Has the work of the central evaluation office had an impact on the policies, programme and projects of the agency? Major, moderate, minor, no impact? Examples?
 - Does the agency have a better understanding of its performance as a result of the evaluation work: programme/project impact and results (successes and failures), implementation issues, operating strengths and weaknesses, development issues?
- 6) *Awareness and understanding of the DAC “Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance”*
- What is the interviewee's awareness/knowledge of the Principles? And in light of the Principles, how would s/he rate the performance of the central evaluation offices on the specific principles of organisational relationships (independence, impartiality and credibility), staff capacities, feedback and dissemination, and cost-effectiveness?
 - Is the performance: i) fully satisfactory in all aspects; ii) partially satisfactory (identify strengths and weaknesses); iii) unsatisfactory (identify primary reasons)?

As there may be instances where the interviewee is not familiar with the Principles and their specific provisions, the interviewer's questions should attempt to determine whether the Principles have been adhered to in practice.

7) *Summary view of evaluation work in the agency*

- Is the agency's view of the role of evaluation in the management and operations of its development programmes: highly supportive, moderately supportive, or indifferent?
- Does the central evaluation office have adequate resources in funds and staffing to carry out the evaluation work it is expected to perform?
- Has the work of the evaluation office had a beneficial impact on the agency's performance?

8) *Assessment of experience with decentralised evaluation work*

In addition to the evaluation work of the central evaluation office, evaluations are carried out by agency divisions and implementing organisations.

- What is the interviewee's assessment of the experience with these decentralised evaluations with respect to quality, impartiality, usefulness?

Suggested outline of interviewer's summary of interviews

Introduction

Coverage: who was interviewed; problems in conducting the interviews.

Findings, analyses, and conclusions of the users of evaluations:

- a) The users knowledge of the evaluation work of the central evaluation offices.

- b) Participation in evaluations.
- c) The quality of the evaluation products including questions of impartiality and credibility.
- d) The relevance and usefulness of the products of evaluation.
- e) The impact of evaluations and their recommendations and lessons on improving the quality of agency programmes.
- f) Awareness and understanding of the DAC “Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance” and their application -- directly or indirectly in practice.
- g) Summary overview of evaluation work in the agency and adherence to the Principles.
- h) Assessment of experience with decentralised evaluation work.

Section 2 should provide summaries of the views of the users with examples and quotes that help illustrate the points they are making. It should also bring out the differences and similarities of the views of the various categories of users: managers, operating staff, technical staff, etc.

Conclusions of the interviewer on:

- a) users' views of the agency's evaluation work and its impact;
- b) role of the Principles, directly or indirectly, in influencing agency evaluation work;
- c) observations on the survey process.

Interviewer's name and position.

Appendix 5.

THE DAC PRINCIPLES FOR EVALUATION OF DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE⁷

I. Introduction

1. In response to its general mandate to strengthen the volume and developmental effectiveness of aid, the DAC has drawn up a series of policy principles addressing key areas of aid programming and management including Project Appraisal, Programme Assistance and Technical Co-operation. Aid evaluation plays an essential role in the efforts to enhance the quality of development co-operation. The following set of principles state the views of DAC Members on the most important requirements of the evaluation process based on current policies and practices as well as donor agency experiences with evaluation and feedback of results.

Donor/Recipient Partnership

2. Development assistance is a co-operative partnership exercise between donors and recipients. The developing countries are responsible for their own development and development assistance can only be subsidiary and complementary to the efforts of the developing countries themselves. Aid supports activities for which developing countries have final responsibility and ownership. Project performance depends on both donor and recipient action. Both have an interest in, and responsibility for, the best use of scarce public funds. Both must therefore be interested in evaluation not only for improving resource use for development through learning from experience but also for accountability to political authorities and general publics.

3. The principles set out below have been prepared mainly for use by aid agencies for evaluating aid-financed activities. However, they should also be useful for developing country authorities in making their own evaluations of aid financed activities and, indeed, other public programmes and projects. Central Conclusions and Complementarily to Other Aid Management Principles.

4. The principles focus on evaluation of both on-going and completed activities. They are complementary to previously agreed DAC principles on the management of development assistance, notably, the Principles for Project Appraisal adopted in 1988, and to the Principles for Programme Assistance and the Principles for New Orientations in Technical Co-operation. Each of these principles contain recommendations for the use of evaluation for the specific aid instruments to which they apply. The principles set out below provide general guidance on the role of aid evaluation in the aid management process, with the following central messages:

7. Development Assistance Committee. *Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance*. OECD 1991 [OECD/GD(91)208].

- Aid agencies should have an evaluation policy with clearly established guidelines and methods and with a clear definition of its
- role and responsibilities and its place in institutional aid structure.
- The evaluation process should be impartial and independent from the process concerned with policy-making, and the delivery and management of development assistance.
- The evaluation process must be as open as possible with the results made widely available.
- For evaluations to be useful, they must be used. Feedback to both policy-makers and operational staff is essential.
- Partnership with recipients and donor co-operation in aid evaluation are both essential; they are an important aspect of recipient institution-building and of aid co-ordination and may reduce administrative burdens on recipients.
- Aid evaluation and its requirements must be an integral part of aid planning from the start. Clear identification of the objectives which an aid activity is to achieve is an essential prerequisite for objective evaluation.

Definition

5. An evaluation is an assessment, as systematic and objective as possible, of an on-going or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, developmental efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision-making process of both recipients and donors.

II. PURPOSE OF EVALUATION

6. The main purposes of evaluation are:

- to improve future aid policy, programmes and projects through feedback of lessons learned;
- to provide a basis for accountability, including the provision of information to the public.

7. Through the evaluation of failures as well as successes, valuable information is generated which, if properly fed back, can improve future aid programmes and projects. Funds for development purposes are scarce compared to the needs, and stakeholders in donor and recipient countries should be enabled to draw to the fullest possible extent on experience to optimise resource use.

8. The accountability notion of evaluation referred to here relates to the developmental results and impact of development assistance. It is distinct from accountability for the use of public funds in an accounting and legal sense, responsibility for the latter usually being assigned to an audit institution. Information about the results of development assistance should be provided to the public and their leaders in both donor and recipient countries.

9. An important purpose of evaluation is to bring to the attention of policy-makers constraints on developmental aid success resulting from policy shortcomings or rigidities both on the donor and recipient side, inadequate co-ordination, and the effectiveness of other practices, such as procurement.

10. Evaluation promotes the dialogue and improves co-operation between the participants in the development process through mutual sharing of experiences at all levels.

III. IMPARTIALITY AND INDEPENDENCE

11. The evaluation process should be impartial and independent in its function from the process concerned with the policy making, the delivery and the management of development assistance.

12. Impartiality contributes to the credibility of evaluation and the avoidance of bias in findings, analyses and conclusions. Independence provides legitimacy to evaluation and reduces the potential for conflict of interest which could arise if policy makers and managers were solely responsible for evaluating their own activities.

13. The requirement for impartiality and independence exists at all stages of the evaluation process, including the planning of the evaluation programme, the formulation of the terms of reference and the selection and approval of evaluation teams. Independence of evaluation can be further enhanced where reports are issued in the name of authors.

Institutional Structure for Managing Evaluation

14. The institutional structure for managing evaluation is crucial to ensuring an effective evaluation process. The organisational aspects must address three requirements: developing a policy and a set of guidelines for evaluation; ensuring impartiality and independence; linking evaluation findings to future activities.

15. Often, certain types of organisation will tend to strengthen one of the above requirements at the expense of others; e.g., ensuring the independence of the process may weaken the potential for providing a strong linkage between the evaluation findings and decision-making. An optimal solution should be sought to balance all of these requirements.

16. Impartiality and independence will best be achieved by separating the evaluation function from the line management responsible for planning and managing development assistance. This could be accomplished by having a central unit responsible for evaluation reporting directly to the minister or the agency head responsible for development assistance, or to a board of directors or governors of the institution. To the extent that some evaluation functions are attached to line management they should report to a central unit or to a sufficiently high level of the management structure or to a management committee responsible for programme decisions. In this case, every effort should be made to avoid compromising the evaluation process and its results. Whatever approach is chosen, the organisational arrangements and procedures should facilitate the linking of evaluation findings to programming and policy making.

17. Aid agencies need a policy on evaluation which should address the above issues as well as the openness of the evaluation process, including the dissemination of results.

IV. CREDIBILITY

18. The credibility of evaluation depends on the expertise and independence of the evaluators and the degree of transparency of the evaluation process. Credibility requires that evaluation should report successes as well as failures. Recipient countries should, as a rule, fully participate in evaluation in order to promote credibility and commitment.

19. Aid agencies need a critical mass of professional evaluation staff in order to have sufficient expertise in their various fields of activity and to ensure credibility of the process.

20. Transparency of the evaluation process is crucial to its credibility and legitimacy. To ensure transparency:

- The evaluation process as a whole should be as open as possible with results made widely available.
- Evaluation reports must distinguish between findings and recommendations. Relevant information to support findings should be included in a way that does not compromise sources.

V. USEFULNESS

21. To have an impact on decision-making, evaluation findings must be perceived as relevant and useful and be presented in a clear and concise way. They should fully reflect the different interests and needs of the many parties involved in development co-operation. Easy accessibility is also crucial for usefulness. The evaluation process itself promotes a further clarification of objectives, improves communication, increases learning, and lays the groundwork for follow-up action.

22. Evaluations must be timely in the sense that they should be available at a time which is appropriate for the decision-making process. This suggests that evaluation has an important role to play at various stages during the execution of a project or programme and should not be conducted only as an ex post exercise. Monitoring of activities in progress is the responsibility of operational staff. Provisions for evaluation by independent evaluation staffs in the plan of operation constitute an important complement to regular monitoring.

VI. PARTICIPATION OF DONORS AND RECIPIENTS

23. Consistent with the partnership principle stressed above, whenever possible, both donors and recipients should be involved in the evaluation process. Since evaluation findings are relevant to both parties, evaluation terms of reference should address issues of concern to each partner, and the evaluation should reflect their views of the effectiveness and impact of the activities concerned. The principle of impartiality and independence during evaluation should apply equally to recipients and donors. Participation and impartiality enhance the quality of evaluation, which in turn has significant implications for long-term sustainability since recipients are solely responsible after the donor has left.

24. Whenever appropriate, the views and expertise of groups affected should form an integral part of the evaluation.

25. Involving all parties concerned gives an opportunity for learning by doing and will strengthen skills and capacities in the recipient countries, an important objective which should also be promoted through training and other support for institutional and management development.

VII. DONOR CO-OPERATION

26. Collaboration between donors is essential in order to learn from each other and to avoid duplication of effort. Donor collaboration should be encouraged in order to develop evaluation methods, share reports and information, and improve access to evaluation findings. Joint donor evaluations should be promoted in order to improve understanding of each others' procedures and approaches and to reduce the administrative burden on the recipient. In order to facilitate the planning of joint evaluations, donors should exchange evaluation plans systematically and well ahead of actual implementation.

VIII. EVALUATION PROGRAMMING

27. An overall plan must be developed by the agency for the evaluation of development assistance activities. In elaborating such a plan, the various activities to be evaluated should be organised into appropriate categories. Priorities should then be set for the evaluation of the categories and a timetable drawn up.

28. These categories must represent the various areas of development assistance. The most frequent type of evaluation will probably be at the project or institutional level, but it is unlikely that such evaluations alone will meet all of the evaluation needs because of the specific nature of their findings. What is often needed is evaluation on a more comprehensive scale and an aggregation of evaluation results. Evaluation programming must take into account the special demands by senior management and policy-makers and synthesise studies of lessons learned.

29. Evaluation capability is needed to cover a broad spectrum of evaluations: policy, programme and project activities as well as sectors, themes, and cross-cutting issues. Evaluations further need to look at agency procedures and management issues.

30. Setting evaluation priorities will be necessary for managerial and financial reasons. A timetable must be included in the evaluation plan. The decisions on the organisation of evaluation activities and timetable should involve users of the evaluation outputs, so that their needs can be taken into account. The evaluation plan requires the support and endorsement of senior management.

31. Aid agencies which have not already done so should elaborate guidelines and/or standards for the evaluation process. These should give guidance and define the minimum requirements for the conduct of evaluations and for reporting.

IX. DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF EVALUATIONS

32. Each evaluation must be planned and terms of reference drawn up in order to:

- define the purpose and scope of the evaluation, including an identification of the recipients of the findings;
- describe the methods to be used during the evaluation;
- identify the standards against which project/programme performance are to be assessed;
- determine the resources and time required to complete the evaluation.

33. The purpose of the evaluation must be explained, e.g., to contribute to improving aid policies, procedures and techniques or to consider a continuation or discontinuation of specific current activities.

34. An evaluation must define the activity that is being evaluated, e.g., projects, institutions, sectors, or programmes and contain such information as background, objectives, activities, expenditures, expected impacts and effects.

35. It is essential to define the questions which will be addressed in the evaluation -- these are often referred to as the "issues" of the evaluation. The issues will provide a manageable framework for the evaluation process and the basis for a clear set of conclusions and recommendations. The following are basic groups of evaluation issues:

-- *Rationale*. Does the undertaking make sense? Are the objectives relevant and realisable? Should alternative objectives be considered?

-- *Objectives Achievement*. Evaluation is very difficult unless the objectives which the evaluated project/programme were to achieve have been clearly defined and the project agreements and operational plans and arrangements for obtaining relevant baseline data had been made. To what extent were the original objectives achieved? Or are likely to be achieved? What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of objectives? Should objectives not have been stated clearly enough to allow for an evaluation of goal achievement, an assessment of impact and effects of the activities undertaken should still be attempted.

-- *Impacts and Effects*. What has happened as a result of the project/programme? This involves not only direct outputs but, very importantly, the basic impacts and effects on the social, economic, environmental and other development indicators resulting from the activity. The examination should be concerned with both intended and unintended results and must also explain the positive and negative impact of external factors, such as changes in basic policy environments, general economic and financial conditions.

36. The aim of asking these questions is to ensure that the evaluator can assess the information and formulate conclusions and recommendations concerning:

-- *The Overall Results*. How successful was the undertaking? Why? Do impacts and effects justify costs? Were the objectives achieved within time and within the budget? Were there any major shortcomings? Were there major achievements?

-- *Sustainability*. The question of whether achievements are sustainable in the longer run is of critical importance.

-- *Alternatives*. Are there better ways of achieving the results?

-- *Lessons Learned*. What are the general lessons which can be drawn and which should be borne in mind when embarking on future programmes?

37. This stage must also define the methods and techniques to be used to address the identified issues. The nature of development assistance suggests that in most cases evaluation will involve a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques. The methods used in the appraisal of an activity should, as a general rule, also be used in the ex post evaluation.

38. In many cases, it is difficult to determine clearly the responsibility for the outcome, as external reasons may or may not be decisive and inseparable from a methodological viewpoint. Although the complexity of the evaluation process must be recognised, an attempt to establish causal relationships must be made.

X. REPORTING, DISSEMINATION AND FEEDBACK

39. Evaluation reporting should be clear, as free as possible of technical language and include the following elements: an executive summary; a profile of the activity evaluated; a description of the evaluation methods used; the main findings; lessons learned; conclusions and recommendations (which may be separate from the report itself).

40. The findings and conclusions of the evaluation are the answers to the questions raised and selected for evaluation. The lessons learned and the recommendations provide the link between the results of the evaluation and future policy and programme development.

41. Systematic dissemination is essential for ensuring improved planning and implementation of development assistance activities. Evaluation results may be disseminated in several ways apart from the evaluation report itself e.g., annual reports providing a synthesis of findings; abstracts/summaries providing a synopsis of findings.

42. Feedback is an essential part of the evaluation process as it provides the link between past and future activities. To ensure that the results of evaluations are utilised in future policy and programme development it is necessary to establish feedback mechanisms involving all parties concerned. These would include such measures as evaluation committees, seminars and workshops, automated systems, reporting and follow-up procedures. Informal means such as networking and internal communications would also allow for the dissemination of ideas and information. In order to be effective, the feedback process requires staff and budget resources as well as support by senior management and the other actors involved.

43. Dissemination and feedback must form a continuous and dynamic part of the evaluation process.

XI. APPLICATION OF THESE PRINCIPLES AND FOLLOW-UP

44. DAC Members agree to:

- review their evaluation policies and procedures against the above principles and to adjust them where necessary;
- review evaluation policies and procedures as part of the DAC aid reviews and other relevant DAC work;
- draw the principles to the attention of their developing country partners as a code of good evaluation practice to be followed whenever possible.